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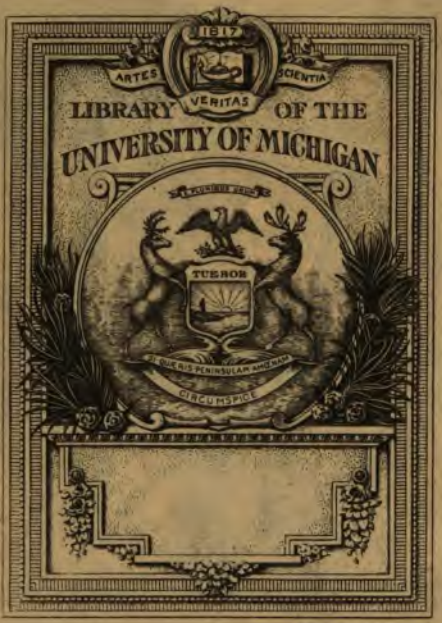
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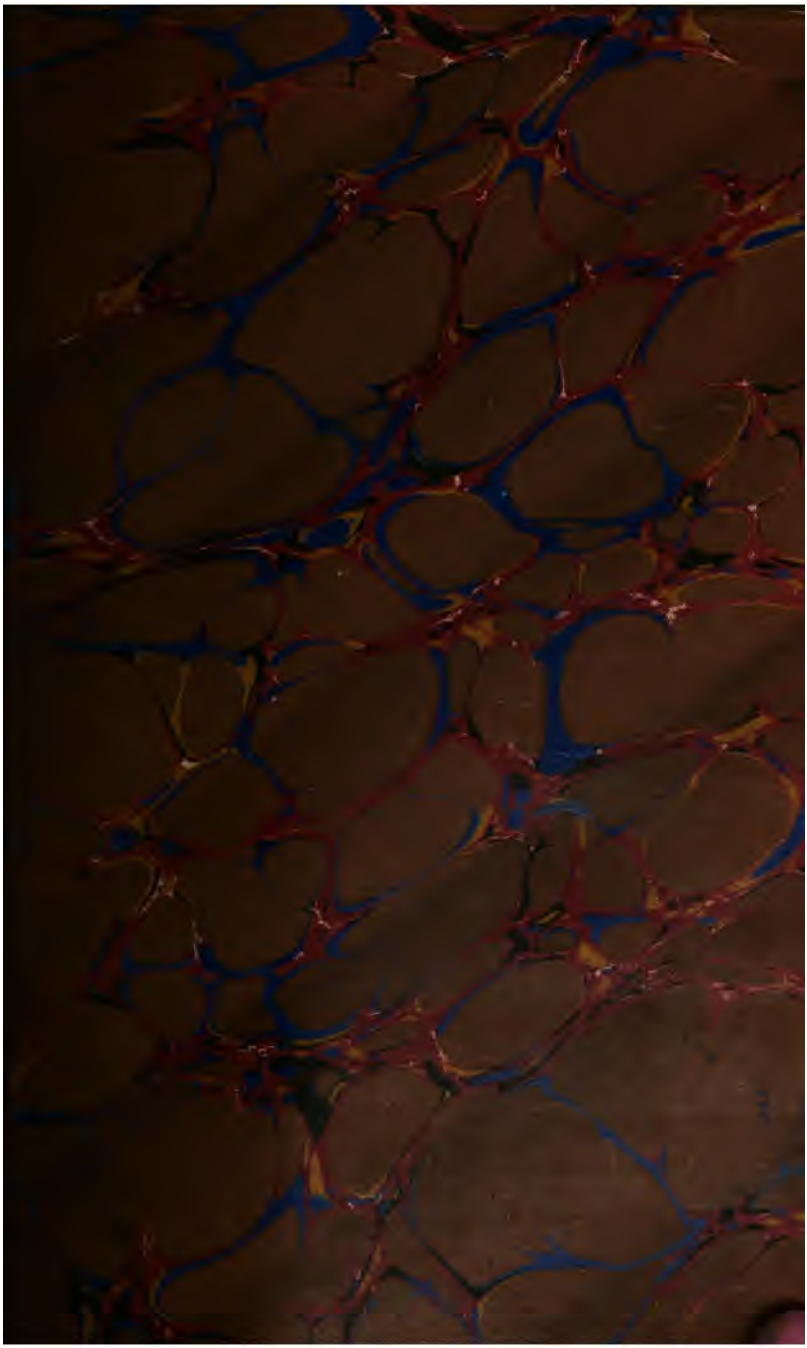

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BROUGHAM'S WORKS

WORKS

OF

HENRY LORD BROUGHAM

VOL. V.

STATESMEN OF THE TIME OF GEORGE III. AND IV.

VOL. III.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	1
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION,	3
ROBESPIERRE,	46
DANTON,	64
CAMILLE DESMOULINS.—ST. JUST,	76
SIÉYES,	98
FOUCHÉ,	103
GENERAL REFLECTIONS,	114
NECKAR,	119
MADAME DE STAËL,	132
MIRABEAU FAMILY,	143
CARNÔT,	172
LAFAYETTE,	195
TALLEYRAND,	211
TALLIEN,	225
NEY,	234
BRISSOT.—THE GIRONDINS,	238
FRENCH BAR DURING THE REVOLUTION,	253
NAPOLEON—WASHINGTON,	260
CARROL,	275

PAGE

JEFFERSON, ... 280

FRANKLIN, ... 291

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY. 295

FREDERIC II., ... 309

GUSTAVUS III., ... 332

THE EMPEROR JOSEPH, ... 344

THE EMPRESS CATHERINE, ... 356

ELIZABETH'S CONDUCT TO MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, . 368

DIALOGUE ON THE MERITS OF REPUBLICAN AND MONARCHICAL GOVERNMENT, ... 375

INDEX, ... 439

PREFACE.

To the work as now published there are several considerable additions made, which seemed necessary for the further illustration of the Revolutionary History, and also for the exposition of the practical conclusions to be drawn from it as warnings and as guides, both to the people and their leaders in other countries.

The commentaries on the conduct of the Thermidoreans and of the Girondins appeared to be required by a strict regard to historical truth, as well as to political principle, how painful soever it might be, to treat some of the most worthless of men and some of the most virtuous, as having worked nearly equal mischief to their country and to the world. The Girondins afford the most remarkable instance in the annals of faction of the evil consequences which may result from party spirit and political enthusiasm acting in combination, but without the light of enlarged views, the control of calm reflection, and the force of fixed resolution.

The noble conduct of the French Bar during the reign of terror had not been in the former publication sufficiently commemorated. Of course reference is here only made to the professional conduct of those eminent and virtuous persons who took no part in political proceedings. Some of the very worst men in the Revolution belonged to the class of lawyers: nay, several of these had obtained a certain success in the profession; and the name of one, at least, greatly distinguished by his legal acquirements, was also involved in the disgrace of a measure among the worst of those dismal times.*

The Dialogue upon the merits of Republican and Monarchical government connects itself naturally with the preceding portions of this volume, which treat of the

* Merlin de Douai, author of the celebrated *Repertoire*, and one of the great lights of jurisprudence, it is painful to reflect, was also author, in his political capacity, of the abominable *Loi des Suspects*.

conduct of the revolutionary chiefs of the old and new world, as well as the actions of some of the European sovereigns. The experience, however, of our own country, and especially certain important passages in our more recent history, shed a useful light upon the argument; while the author's share in those events seemed to inculcate the duty of enforcing the maxims which a near observation had taught. It is hardly necessary to add that these maxims are of beneficial application, not only where the question is between forming a constitution on the Republican and on the Monarchical plan, but also where under a Monarchy the tendency of measures comes under consideration, either with regard to the hazard of constitutional change, or with regard to the public benefit, even supposing the established order of things safe from all risk of disturbance. One lesson, most important and of a most practical description, is inculcated by all the discussion in the Dialogue, and all the facts in the preceding narrative—the supreme necessity of absolutely excluding the multitude, ill-informed and averse to deliberation, from any direct interference with the government, whether in its executive, its legislative, or its judicial functions. The principle may be stated a little more generally, but as absolutely—that the most sacred rule of civil polity is the withholding all power whatever where there is no effectual, that is, no individual responsibility. The whole history of the French Revolution is a continual and a frightful exemplification of the prodigious evils that flow from a breach of this fundamental law.*

* In the Introduction to vol. iv. one or two instances were given of the injustice done to statesmen who flourish under a Parliamentary government, by the great over-estimate formed of the importance of debating powers. An example as remarkable as those which were then given, was the late Lord Mulgrave, who took but little part in Parliamentary debate, and yet is well known to all who served in office either with him or under him, to have been a person of rare capacity both in council and in administration. By such he is always placed in the highest rank among our statesman. All who have heard either Sir R. Peel, or Mr. Croker, or indeed any of his colleagues, mention the subject, will at once assent to the truth of this observation.—Lord Dundonald (then Lord Cochrane), whose brilliant services were performed under his Naval administration, it is believed, will bear a similar testimony.—An oversight in p. 194 of vol. iv. occurred, namely, the erroneous statement of Lord D.'s Order of the Bath not having been restored.

CHATEAU ELEANOR LOUISE, PROVENCE,
10*th January*, 1856.

STATESMEN

OF

THE TIME OF GEORGE III.

INTRODUCTION.

THE third series of this work is delivered to the public under a grateful sense of the favour with which the two former were received.* It has been my desire to make some small return for such kindness, by redoubling my care to prevent any bias of a party or a personal kind from influencing the opinions pronounced, whether upon men or upon measures. Conscious as every one must feel, how naturally our affections are engaged in behalf of those whose opinions agree with our own, and how apt the adversaries of those opinions are to be hardly dealt with in the judgments we form of them, I have most scrupulously made it my endeavour to treat all with whose history I have dealt, as if I was ignorant of the principles which professedly guided their conduct, until I came to describe how far it was governed by those principles.

It has further been the constant object of these pages to record whatever tended to promote the great and united causes of public virtue, free institutions, and universal peace; holding up their friends to the veneration of mankind, their enemies to scorn and aversion; while the glare that success gives to bad actions, and the shade into which good ones are

* This refers to the first edition

thrown by failure, have, as far as possible, been shown to be temporary only; and mankind have been constantly warned to struggle against the prepossession thus raised by the event, and to mete out their praise or blame by the just measure of desert.

The first part of the volume now published relates to the French Revolution, and to the men who bore the foremost part in its most trying and interesting crisis. In giving this account I have enjoyed particular advantages, having the pleasure of knowing several worthy and intelligent men who bore a part in the transactions of those times. To one of them, my learned colleague in the National Institute, M. Lakanal, I was introduced by the kindness of our distinguished friend M. Mignet; and I have received from him many important communications. He was not a member of either of the Committees, Salut Publique, or Sûreté Générale; but he belonged to the high popular party in the Convention, and he was at the head of the Committee of Public Instruction. He retains, at the advanced age of above fourscore, all the ardent zeal for human improvement, and steady devotion to the cause of freedom, which so eminently marked his early years.—General Carnôt I also had the pleasure of knowing, and the great advantage of discussing with him both mathematical and political subjects. With Madame de Staël, Prince Talleyrand, and General la Fayette, I had an intimate acquaintance.

The reader of these pages is further under obligations to my learned friend Earl Stanhope for a valuable note respecting Fouché.

BROUGHAM, *1st October*, 1843.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

It is impossible to understand the reign of terror which in France succeeded the overthrow of the monarchy, or to form a just idea of the too-celebrated individuals whose names are inseparably attached to the history of that dismal period, without examining the origin of the Revolution, marking the position in which it both found and placed the country, and tracing the steps of its progress from the first commotions that shook the ancient establishment, to the shock that consummated the destruction of the political system, and for a season appeared to threaten the ruin of society itself.

A controversy at one time prevailed upon the share which philosophers, and literary men generally, had in bringing about the great changes now under our consideration. They who raised this question really meant to discuss the influence which had been exerted by the general diffusion of knowledge and improvement of the people, in creating a desire for more ample privileges and for a better system of government. For, although some few reasoners had contended that there was a sect of free-thinking men both disbelieving the religion and disapproving the political institutions of the State, leagued together in a kind of conspiracy to overthrow both, for the purpose of emancipating their species from all the ancient control under which they had so long been living, yet no one, who seriously reflected upon the disparity between the means and the end in the structure of this supposed scheme, could believe that any such plot had a chance of success,

unless in so far as its authors might aid the general progress of mental improvement, which no one could deny was everywhere to be traced. Thus the Abbé Barruel and Professor Robison, who were the principal advocates of the doctrine, had not many followers; while a much more considerable body of reasoners maintained, not merely that the revolutionary spirit which had broken out in France, and was with difficulty repressed in other countries, had no connection with any plot or the machinations of any sect, but that the whole convulsion which shook Europe to its centre was the result of comparatively trivial and accidental circumstances.

This opinion was maintained with greater force of argument and with more weight of authority, by M. Mounier, formerly President of the National Assembly, and distinguished by his talents, his virtues, and his patriotism, than by the bulk of ordinary writers and speakers. He had distinguished himself by the moderation of his liberal opinions when a member of the States-General; he had filled the chair of the assembly with great credit; and he had quitted France when the profligate and cruel councils of the violent party began to prevail. No man was better entitled to be heard upon the causes of a Revolution in which he had borne so honourable a part; and as his political opinions alike rejected the extremes of either side, dissenting as much from those who resisted all change as from those whom no change would satisfy, he seemed as safe a guide to the truth of the case as could well be selected from the host of reasoners whom the controversy called forth.

M. Mounier denied altogether the share ascribed to lodges of freemasons and chapters of *Illuminati* in producing the revolutionary movement; he rejected entirely the notions of those who traced to such actual conspiracies any portion of that great event; and had he stopped here, no one could have questioned the

soundness of his views. Indeed he was enabled, from his personal knowledge of the actors in the French States-General and National Assembly, to refute the specific statements of fact upon which the speculations of the Abbé Barruel and his followers reposed. Thus, to take a single example, the machinations which were asserted to have been practised upon M. Camille Jourdan (a worthy person of extremely moderate talents and no influence), and to have gained him over to the revolutionary party, could not by possibility have been so used, inasmuch as that gentleman assured M. Mounier, that he had never in his life seen or communicated with a single individual of those confidently named by the Abbé as his seducers, or with any other persons of the same class.

But M. Mounier did not content himself with excluding the lodges and the chapters of secret associations; he was equally confident in his exclusion of the philosophers and their writings. Not only, according to him, had the direct attempts by plot and conspiracy no hand in undermining the old French Government, but the indirect and gradual influence of infidel opinions, and revolutionary doctrines propagated through the press—the encyclopædias, the dissertations, the romances, the correspondence, the poems, the epigrams —all the heavy and all the light artillery of the band so formidable by its numbers, its learning, its genius, and its wit, so indefatigable in its exertions against the established order of things, so incessant in its efforts to undermine all prejudices, to strip all established institutions of the respect with which time and feeling and associations had clothed them, so zealous in converting mankind from settled faith in holy things, in rousing them against abuses as well in the State as the Church, in declaring the natural rights of men, in painting their wrongs, in displaying the merits of the people, and denouncing the crimes of priests and princes—all the teaching of the D'Alemberts, the

Condorcets, the sneerings of the Voltaires, the eloquence of the Rousseaus, the fancy of the Diderots, the social powers of the Holbachs and the Grimms—all were without influence in preparing the great change; and the press, which over Paris and over France had for a century been working with the corruptions of the Court and the Church and the sufferings of the people, and had taken its whole tone from the writings of those great men, and the circles of fashion which everywhere concentrated and reflected the lights thus shed abroad—were all, according to M. Mounier, wholly foreign to the purpose, wholly unconcerned in bringing about a change that took precisely the direction to which all those efforts pointed; in overthrowing a system of ecclesiastical and political government, against which all those blows had been aimed; in producing a general movement of that people, to excite whom in this very manner and to this very movement all those various exertions had so evidently been made. It should seem that those who held such opinions as these were prepared to believe, on seeing a battery erected against a town, and bearing its fire upon the walls for weeks, that the breach which was made had not been caused by bullets, but by an accidental earthquake. According to M. Mounier and his followers, the whole mystery of the Revolution was contained in the accidental derangement of the Finances, the convocation of the States-General, and the vacillating conduct of the Court and the Ministers in first suffering the Commons—the *tiers état*—to have a double number of representatives, and afterwards allowing the three orders to join in their deliberations, sitting in the same hall. Had it not been, they contended, for the recent addition of nearly fifty millions to the debt, while the revenue was insufficient to defray the public expenditure and pay the interest owing to the public creditor, had not the King agreed to call the States when no means of obtaining the needful supplies could

be devised; nay, after they were called, had not an undue proportion of deputies been granted to the Commons, and the majority thus created being permitted to act on the whole body by joint voting,—the whole storm would have passed away, and the ancient establishments have continued to guide the religion and rule the fortunes of the country.

On the opposite side of the question there appeared one of the most remarkable pieces that ever adorned the periodical literature of any country. Mr. Jeffrey began his labours in the 'Edinburgh Review,' and laid the foundation of that celebrated journal's fame by a paper, in which he examined and refuted M. Mounier's doctrine—a paper of which it would be hard to determine whether the inexhaustible imagery of its illustrations, the profound wisdom of its opinions, or the felicitous diction of its style, most deserves our admiration.* This eminent person and those who agree with him are far from denying that the deranged finances of the country, and the imbecility of the Government, had a share in accelerating the Revolution and in directing its course. A yearly expenditure of sixteen millions, with a revenue of less than nineteen, leaving not three to pay the interest and charges on the debt of between ten and eleven millions annually, formed such dreadful embarrassment as might well shake any established system, how wisely and how vigorously soever it was administered. But it is certain that greater disorder has prevailed in the revenue of other States, and has been got over by the rough, though vigorous, expedients which arbitrary power has at command, without even shaking the stability of the national institutions. Nor could all the errors of the Neckers, the Briennes, the Maurepas, the Calonnes, have dislocated any portion of a system

* The omission of this his first and best paper, perhaps the best that ever appeared in that Journal, from the four volumes of his works, seems remarkable.

which had not been prepared to crumble in pieces by the ravages of time, or the undermining action of the public opinion, or the ferment of popular discontent, and the universal prevalence of a love of change.

M. Mounier was correctly and beautifully described in the paper referred to as having given for the causes of the Revolution, circumstances which really proved it to be already begun; as having gone no farther back than to the earliest of its apparent effects, instead of tracing its hidden sources; as having mistaken the cataracts that broke the stream for the fountains from which it rose; and contented himself with referring the fruit to the blossom, without taking any account of the germination of the seed, or the underground winding of the root.*

It is certain that, though the financial derangement powerfully aided the preachers of revolt, and though their efforts were not met by any adequate vigour on the part of those who administered the powers of the government, yet these were far enough from being the cause of the Revolution. The apostles of change found more powerful coadjutors and more active and ample elements of mischief, in the great abuses which prevailed both in the Ecclesiastical and the Civil institutions of the country. A church endowed with above five millions of revenue from tithes alone, and with nearly half the land in the kingdom, assigned only a wretched pittance of twenty pounds a-year to the parochial or working clergy, while all the rest was a prey to the vices of a luxurious, an idle, and a dissolute hierarchy. The landed property of the country was so unequally divided that one-third of it alone was in the hands of the lay commonalty, the church and the nobles possessing all the rest. The taxes were so unequally distributed that the largest of them all (the *Taille*), yielding between seven and eight mil-

* Edinburgh Review, vol. i. p. 7.

lions, fell wholly upon the peasantry, neither church nor nobles paying a farthing towards it; and it was calculated that if an acre of land afforded three guineas of gross produce, nearly two went to the revenue, eighteen shillings to the landlord, and a crown only remained to the cultivator. In England Mr. A. Young used to reckon that the cultivator enjoyed three-fourths of the produce, while in France he had but a twelfth part; placing him in a situation nine times less advantageous. The grievances arising from the feudal system, and which were felt far more severely in France than in any other feudal kingdom, completed the distress of the people, affecting them both in their subsistence, in their comforts, and in their pride. Nor can it be doubted that, upon a high-spirited people like the French, with minds peculiarly susceptible of affront, the mental degradation which these feudal distinctions inflicted was more galling than any actual suffering which, in their material comforts, they had to endure. It is highly probable that the peasant felt more vexed at seeing the lord's pigeons trespassing on his crops, without the power of destroying them, knowing that the lord might not possess an acre of land,* than he did from paying a tithe of that crop to the church and a third to the landlord; and the statute labour (*corvée*) which he always had to perform must have harassed him incalculably more than a much heavier burthen shared with the feudal lord. Accordingly, of all the changes effected by the Revolution, there was none which went more home to every Frenchman's bosom than the famous decree sweeping away feudal privileges. The vote of the Assembly on the 4th of August diffused joy over all France, such as perhaps no other act of legislative

* The *droit de Colombier* was wholly dependent on the seignory, and might belong to a lord who had no property in land: the actual owner had it only to a very limited extent.—*Political Philosophy*, part 1, chap. xiii.

power ever excited. It may be said, without a figure of speech, to have raised one universal shout of exultation through the whole expanse of that vast and populous country. The language applied by Mr. Burke to the memorable proceedings of that night, and which termed it the "St. Bartholomew of the privileged orders," was employed by but a very few, and did not express the sentiments prevailing even among the members of those orders themselves, from whom indeed the proposition mainly had proceeded.

Just half a century after these events I happened to be travelling in a remote district of Provence, when, reposing in the heat of the day under a porch, my eye was attracted by some placards, whose letters were preserved by the great dryness of that fine climate, though they had been there for fifty years. Those papers were the official promulgation of the several decrees for secularizing the clergy, abolishing the monastic orders, and abrogating all feudal privileges, signed by the several Presidents of the Assembly, Bureau de Pusey,* Camus, and Siéyes. The incident is exceedingly trivial in itself; but I shall not easily forget its effect in carrying me back to the great scenes of the Revolution, ere yet its path had been stained with blood, while virtuous men might honestly exult in its success, and the friends of their species could venture to hope for the unsullied triumphs of the sacred warfare waged with long-established abuses. The past seemed connected with the present, and the mighty consequences visible all around which had flowed from the changes recorded in those few lines, appeared to rise, as it were, before the sight, springing out of their causes. Nor must it be forgotten that the perils of the tempest having happily passed away, the atmosphere which it had cleared was breathed in a pleasing reflection that the region over which its fury

* Afterwards confined at Olmutz with Lafayette.

had swept was now flourishing in unprecedented prosperity, for which the price paid had assuredly been heavy, but not perhaps too heavy compared with the blessings it had purchased.

Hitherto we have only considered the proceedings of the National Assembly itself; but that memorable body was not the only organ of public opinion and popular feeling, nor were its deliberations entirely free and uncontrolled. As soon as parties began to form themselves within its circle, appeals to the people out of doors were the natural consequence, each seeking to gain the weight arising in revolutionary times from popular support. At first, with the exception of one or two scenes of dreadfully excited popular fury, the press alone was the channel through which the party leaders sought to influence public opinion. The religious feelings of the people were next appealed to; but the tendency of the clergy to support the ancient institutions, and the course of hostility to the Church so early pursued by almost all parties in the Assembly, soon brought such feeble and roundabout appeals to a close; and a more summary and effectual mode of agitating was discovered. Clubs were formed, at which men not belonging to the Assembly, as well as deputies, met to discuss the topics of the day, and especially the proceedings of their representatives. These meetings were at first private and not numerous; soon they became better attended, and were much frequented by the deputies themselves; then their doors were flung open to the people. The earliest association of this kind was formed by the deputies from Brittany. When the National Assembly was removed from Versailles to the capital, the club, becoming more numerous, held its meetings at the Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Honoré, and admitted as members many persons not belonging to the National Assembly. Perceiving that its influence upon the Assembly was considerable, the Club now

endeavoured to rule the municipality or Town-Council of Paris, a body always possessed of great influence from the large revenues at its disposal, and the great number of persons in its constant employ for the management of those revenues, as well as of the Metropolitan Police. The Jacobin Club, as it was now termed, extended its influence to the provinces, and formed everywhere affiliated societies or clubs which corresponded with it, took their tone from its debates, and exercised in each town an influence like its own.

Dissension, however, broke out in the mother society itself. The more moderate men, with Lafayette and Siéyes at their head, retired to form an association of their own, which they termed the Club of '89, while Lameth and Barnave directed the proceedings of the Jacobins. The new Club chiefly influenced the Assembly; the Jacobins always made their appeal to the people. The Royalist party soon attempted a similar policy, first forming a Club called the "*Impartiaux*," which had no success; then one termed the "*Monarchique*," which was so much better attended that it excited the jealousy of the Parisian mob, gave rise to tumults, and was shut up at the beginning of the year 1791 on that account by the police, which thought it just and reasonable to punish the party assailed, because those who attacked it had been guilty of some violence.

The Jacobins now underwent another change. The Lameths and Barnaves, unwilling to push matters to extremity, formed a new club, called the "*Feuillans*," from the convent at which they met; and the direction of the Jacobins fell into the hands of Pétion and of Robespierre. But there were some who deemed these men and their followers not sufficiently favourable to extreme courses. Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Fabre d'Eglantine seceded to form a more violent club, which met at the convent of the *Vieux Cordeliers*, and took from thence their name. Among these different

clubs, the Jacobins exercised the greatest influence both over the Assembly, the municipality, and the people at large; but all of them, by their unceasing agitation, kept the people in a constant ferment of disquiet; all of them, by their overbearing conduct, kept the deliberations of the Assembly under a control as indecent as it was pernicious; all of them prepared the materials of a combustible train, which a spark might at any time fire into a general explosion. Unhappily the Assembly did not present from the first a firm and determined aspect of resistance, so as to secure for itself the unbiassed freedom of discussion and of decision. But the first Assembly had far less to suffer from the interruption of the multitude than the second and the Convention afterwards had to endure.

It was to be remarked that the total number of those who frequented and composed the clubs was really far from being formidable. Thus 1,500 was the whole body which usually composed the Jacobin meetings—a number quite inefficient to overcome either the constituted authorities of the capital, or the mass of its inhabitants, though truly formidable as a band of active agitators. For it must be remembered that all those men were demagogues and intriguers—men heated with enthusiasm, or agitated by the love of change, or prompted by mere desire of mischief; and as for their debates, the meetings were far too numerous for anything like discussion; so that when they made the proceedings of the legislature the subject of their deliberation every night as soon as the Assembly had adjourned, nothing could be heard but violent invective against some members, and exaggerated praise of others, ending in a resolution, carried by acclamation of the assembled mob, to excite some tumult among the multitude, in order either to further or obstruct the course of the national councils. The more sober-minded and respectable classes of the community held aloof from all such proceedings. The great majority

of the trades-people, the shopkeepers, the artizans, even the bettermost labourers, and almost all the proprietors, or persons of fixed means, took no part in what was going on, but regarded the acts of the legislature with interest, and the violence of the clubs with silent dread; while the mere rabble, which had nothing to lose, and never reflected on questions which they were too ignorant to understand, were—either from love of confusion and its sister, plunder, or from the mere heat of uninformed but easily excited fancy and feeling—the ready tools of the clubmen, as often as a demonstration of mob force was wanted, in order to overawe the Government, or to determine the conduct of individuals. It became thus clear that a small minority was enabled to rule the multitude, and influence the people of the capital. A similar force was exerted by the provincial clubs upon the people of the towns; and the influence exerted on the deliberations of the Assembly was the power of a small but active body, who had thrown off all regard to order or moderation, and who were devoted to whatever most worked for great changes, with an audacity to which fear was as much a stranger as principle, or prudence, or discretion.

When the National Assembly had destroyed the greater evils of which the people complained, and had formed a constitution upon the principles of a mixed or limited monarchy, they voluntarily stripped themselves of their functions, abdicated their power, and resigned into the hands of the people the high trust which had been delegated to them. Such a course was quite fitting, and indeed was the inevitable consequence of a new constitution being established. But there was coupled with the dissolution of the Assembly a provision unexampled in the history of human folly, and which nevertheless was adopted almost without discussion, and by general acclamation. It was declared that no one of the members of the first Assembly should be capable of being elected to the second;

and the consequence was, that every man of weight and experience, all those whose capacity and integrity had most recommended them to the confidence of their fellow-citizens, whose trustworthiness had been brought to the test of experience, and whose opinions had become known to the world, were excluded from the body which was called to work the new Constitution, and to make a code of municipal laws for France. Unknown, inexperienced, untried men were alone suffered to execute the most important functions that mortals can perform, and in circumstances of the greatest difficulty. The result answered to the expectations which all reasonable men had formed. The conduct of the legislative body was that of an inexperienced multitude, wholly under the control of the most violent parties out of doors, unable to maintain its own independence, and incapable even of preserving the decorous appearance of a senate in its own hall, as often as the mob rushed into its presence.

But the bad constitution of the new Assembly was produced not more by the absurd rule excluding all the former members, than by the other means which the authors of that rule used to fill it with the creatures of their faction. The clubs, especially the more powerful one of the Jacobins, were the instigators of Robespierre's motion for the exclusion; and they assured themselves that its result would be to throw into their hands the whole elections of the new legislature. Accordingly they pursued a course of agitation and canvass with the unceasing activity which is only known to popular bodies, with the boldness which even they only possess in the troublous times of revolutionary excitement, and with a perseverance unusual to popular bodies even in those times. The mother club of Paris disposed of all the elections there,* and the affiliated societies in the departments

* It must be confessed that frequently the French people displayed in their elections a regard for their principles, and a sense of gratitude towards

exercised equal sway over the provincial returns. The influence of the clubs therefore, but especially of the Jacobin Club, was prodigiously augmented by the general election; and over the new Assembly they exercised an almost unlimited control. In proportion to the obscurity and insignificance of the newly-elected deputies was the importance of those who had obtained the whole confidence of the country by their great exploits in the former Assembly. That weight must have been constantly felt to bias the deliberations of their unknown and nameless successors, even had no means been provided of bringing it to bear directly and substantially upon the proceedings of the legislative body; but the clubs, in which the known leaders, members of the former Assembly, continued to debate all questions before the people, and with the greatest publicity, seconded by the press, rendered their influence altogether irresistible. If Robespierre, in proposing their exclusion from the new Assembly, had no other design than the avowed object of extending the popular power, and purifying the legislature from all personal and party taint, nothing can be considered more absurd than the scheme; but if his plan was to make the new Assembly the mere instrument of a few men who had borne sway in the old, and to place the whole powers of the state in the hands of a few agitators, acting through the mob of Paris, the project must be allowed on all hands to

public benefactors, which we in vain look for among the people of our own country. No man of any eminence in the two first Assemblies was excluded from a seat in the Convention or Council of Five Hundred; and if any one lost his election in the places of his own department, some other was sure to choose him. To Carnôt the extraordinary honour was paid of no less than fourteen places returning him to the Council of Five Hundred. In England, let the man who has rendered the most valuable services in Parliament, and shown himself the best qualified to discharge the important duties of a reprcsentative, lose his seat by any accident, and, for want of funds and of aristocratic support, he may reckon on being left out altogether. No other place feels a call to return him, as constant experience has shown, to the extreme discredit of the English character.

have been wisely and warily conceived, and certainly its success was complete.

Fully to perceive the obscurity of the men into whose hands the legislative power was now nominally committed, we have only to look at the official reports of the debates during the month of October, 1791, when the new Assembly met. Forty-three members spoke in the second meeting: of these the names of sixteen only are given; the remaining twenty-seven are in blank, the reporters having been utterly unable to name them; they are all called Monsieur. . . . . In the third sitting twenty-seven spoke, and twenty are recorded anonymously. The temper of the body, moved entirely by the Jacobin Club, may be ascertained with almost equal accuracy from the proceedings which first were taken. The titles of *Sire* and *Your Majesty* were refused to the King, the first magistrate under the constitution which they had just sworn to uphold; and a seat was allotted to him in the Chamber of the size, form, and elevation of the President's! The childish nature of these measures, while it conveyed a notion of the petty minds that were ruling France, could not conceal from the eye of the observer the evil spirit which guided their deliberations.

The power of the clubs, and especially of the Jacobins, now rose in proportion to the obscurity and insignificance of the men thus unknown who led the deliberations of the Assembly. But it was not by merely holding their nightly meetings, and giving vent to the most violent sentiments in their inflammatory harangues, that the Jacobins obtained so uncontrollable an influence. Those meetings, no doubt, of themselves were sufficient to bring into complete discredit the proceedings of the Assembly, because they were attended by the ablest and most popular men in public life, and their debates naturally excited far more interest than those of the obscure Assembly.

In this country the Parliament has always found it necessary, for the maintenance of its own superiority and importance, possibly for preserving its existence, to put down with a strong hand every rival body. Accordingly, in 1817, when the convention was assembled, of delegates to sit in London, discussing public measures, and about to publish reports of their debates, the Parliament passed an Act declaring such a meeting unlawful, as had been done formerly by the Irish Parliament, and since the Union by the British Parliament, with respect to Ireland. The ground of the apprehensions which led to these measures was the consciousness that, independent of the direct authority of the legislature derived from its actual power, its weight with the people depends, at least in modern times, upon its debates; and that a greater portion of that weight than it could afford to lose would inevitably be transferred to the rival body. In Paris the Assembly was weakened, and all but suspended, by the operation of the same causes in the proceedings of the Jacobin Club; but though these might, in the end, have proved destructive to the Assembly, the Jacobins were not content to await the result of so slow a process of discredit. They determined on keeping alive the direct authority of the Assembly, and using it as their instrument. They assumed, therefore, the tone of superiority, and used the language of dictation. Their resolutions were communicated by deputations at the Assembly's bar; but they had recourse to other measures for the purpose of giving weight to their representations, and overawing at once the executive and the legislative functions of the state. The municipality of Paris was under the control of the club; and the mob, chiefly through that body, whose funds were large, and whose servants were very numerous, was so completely at the club's disposal that it could, upon any occasion, bring into the field a force of thousands, among whom

were many desperate men, ready at all times for every extremity of sanguinary violence. The greatest outrages were indeed, at first, not committed in the capital, but by the affiliated societies, chiefly in the south of France. Alarming disturbances broke out, particularly at Nismes, where the Catholics and Protestants came into collision, exasperating by their religious fanaticism the violence of political faction; and a great number of lives were sacrificed to the fury of the contending parties. The amount of this slaughter is differently stated, but no account reduces it below several hundreds; and the Assembly, acting under the control of the mother club, did not bring to punishment some atrocious miscreants whose cannibal ferocity had been proved before it, but suffered them, after a slight examination, to return and renew the same horrors upon the scene of their former crimes.

It appears from various unsuspected sources of information, that the leaders of the extreme parties were fully sensible of their having only an inconsiderable numerical force compared with those who adhered either to the ancient order of things, or the new and mixed constitution. The republican party formed a very inconsiderable minority everywhere, though in Paris they had a following among the literary and scientific classes, and among the lower orders, ever ready for change, and prone to fancy that all confusion must benefit them. But the party of the Gironde, the earliest to declare for a republic, were all along conscious of their weakness in point of numerical strength, and felt the necessity of overawing the majority by strong demonstrations of physical force. Even after this had produced its effect in silencing opposition, and attracting that portion of the multitude which in civil broils is always ready to side with the more powerful party, we find the Republican leaders confessing with bitterness of spirit that they had but a small proportion of the people with them. After the

overthrow of monarchy, it was a saying of Barrère, "Il y a une République—il n'y a pas de républicains."* —One of the Gironde (Saulavie) boasted that his party "had defeated the wishes of the country on the 10th August with three thousand workmen."—When Pétion was declaring that there were but five Republicans in all France, Collot d'Herbois and Merlin de Thionville, in an altercation with him, exclaimed, "Nous avons fait le dix d'Août sans vous, et nous allons faire la République contre vous."†—As late as July 3, 1791, we find Merlin de Douai speaking of the abolition of royalty with horror as meaning "a frightful civil war," and arguing on the utter impossibility of forming a republic in an extensive country. (*Mém. de Lafayette*, iii. 383.)—Danton, in his address to the Council of Ministers upon the measures to be taken for the defence of the country after the allies had taken Longwy, and were cannonading Verdun (31st August, 1792), used these remarkable expressions: "Vous ne pouvez pas vous dissimuler l'extrême minorité dans l'état du parti qui veut la république."‡ His inference from thence was, that terror alone would gain the day. "Il faut faire peur aux Royalistes. Effrayez les!"§—On the eve of the too-memorable days of September, he followed up this counsel with these ever-to-be-remembered words: "Pour vaincre, que faut-il? De l'audace! Encore de l'audace! et toujours de l'audace!—et la France est sauvée."‖

Upon this principle the Jacobins and other leaders

* "There is a Republic—there are no Republicans."

† "We accomplished the 10th of August without you, and we are going to make the Republic in spite of you."

‡ "You cannot conceal from yourselves the very insignificant minority of the party in the country which is for a republic."

§ "It is necessary to frighten the Royalists! Terrify them!"

‖ "To conquer, what is wanting? Audacity! still audacity! always audacity!—and France is saved."—For what reason I know not, the most remarkable words, "*et la France est sauvée*," are left out by most authors. The debate in the *Moniteur* gives them as in the text.

of the extreme party faithfully acted. The Gironde, composed chiefly of deputies from that district, and thence deriving their name, were men of respectable character, averse for the most part to violent proceedings, much connected with the press, of a speculative and literary cast, disliking, even despising all popular associations, but of a blind fanaticism in favour of their own political opinions. At first they are supposed not to have favoured republican courses, chiefly from their unpopular tastes and habits. But, whether from finding themselves without the support of any portion of the community if they maintained their merely constitutional doctrines, or from the natural tendency of those doctrines when embraced with fanatical zeal to merge in republicanism, certain it is that they soon became the chief patrons of those extreme views which sought the destruction of royalty; and though disinclined to all excesses, were fain to call for so much violence as might silence their adversaries, giving the minority that power through terror which they wanted by the force of reason, or on the balance of numbers. Accordingly they actively joined in a very indecent attack both upon the Assembly and the Palace, which the republican mob made on the 20th of June, when they marched armed through the hall of the former, and, forcing their entrance into the courts and chambers of the latter, compelled the unhappy monarch to recognize the power of the mob by wearing the red cap, and all but violated the sanctity of his person. The virtual destruction of the monarchy soon followed; for on the 10th of August the Government had not the vigour, or Pétion, the mayor, and other heads of the police, had not the honesty, to prevent an armed mob of many thousands from occupying the palace and massacreing the Swiss guards, whom Louis had with inconceivable folly persisted in retaining about his person, without having the firmness to use them in his defence.

The imprisonment of the royal family and the calling a National Convention, which at its first sitting established the Republic, were the immediate consequences of that memorable day. Yet a few weeks before, sixty-nine out of the eighty-three departments into which France was then divided, had declared themselves friendly to the existing and moderate monarchical constitution; and only two days before the capture of the Tuileries by the mob, a trial of strength between the parties in the Assembly, on the motion for Lafayette's impeachment, who had openly declared against extreme measures, gave the moderate party a majority of four hundred and six over two hundred and twenty-four voices. When the blow was struck, even before the new elections, these moderate men had disappeared; and the Convention, containing many members of the second or Legislative Assembly, with all the most eminent of the first or Constituent, was forced to follow with blind deference the councils of the republican leaders, or rather to obey the dictation of the Jacobin Club.

Here let us pause, and respectfully giving ear to the warnings of past experience, as whispered by the historic muse, let us calmly revolve in our minds the very important lessons of wisdom and of virtue, applicable to all times, which these memorable details from recent annals are fitted to teach.

In the *first* place, they show the danger of neglecting due precautions against the arts and the acts of violent partizans working upon the public mind, and of permitting them to obtain an ascendant, by despising their power, or trusting to their being overwhelmed and lost in the greater multitude of the peaceable and the good. The numbers of the ill-intentioned may be very inconsiderable; yet the tendency of such

extreme opinions, when zealously propagated, because fanatically entertained, is always to spread; their direction is ever forward; and the disposition of the respectable and peaceable classes is ever to be inactive, sluggish, indifferent, ultimately submissive. When Mr. Burke compared the agitators of his day to the grasshoppers in a summer's sun, and the bulk of the people to the British ox, whose repose under the oak was not broken by the importunate chink rising from the insects of an hour, he painted a picturesque and pleasing image, and one accurate enough for the purpose of showing that the public voice is not spoken by the clamours of the violent. But unhappily the grasshopper fails to represent the agitator in this, that it cannot rouse any one of the minority to the attack; while the ox does represent but too faithfully the respectable majority, in that he is seldom roused from his ruminating half-slumber till it is too late to avert his fate.

But, *secondly*, it is not merely the activity of agitators that arms them with force to overpower the bulk of the people—their acts of intimidation are far more effectual than any assiduity and any address. We see how a handful of men leading the Paris mob overturned the monarchy, and then set up and maintained an oligarchy of the most despotic character that ever was known in the world, all the while ruling the vast majority of a people that utterly loathed them, ruling that people with an iron rod, and scourging them with scorpions. This feat of tyranny they accomplished by terror alone. A rabble of ten or twelve thousand persons occupying the capital overawed half a million of men as robust, perhaps as brave, as themselves; but the rabble were infuriated, and they had nothing to lose; the Parisian burghers were calm, and had shops, and wives, and children; and they were fain to be still, in order that no outrage should be committed on their property or their persons. The tendency of

great meetings of the people is two-fold—their numbers are always exaggerated both by the representations of their leaders* and by the fears of the bystanders; and the spectacle of force which they exhibit, and the certainty of the mischief which they are capable of doing, when excited and resisted by any but the force of troops, scares all who do not belong to them. Hence the vast majority of the people, afraid to act, remain quiet, and give the agitators the appearance of having no adversaries. They reverse the maxim, whoso is not with us is against us, and hold that all are with them whom they may have terrified into silence and repose. That this effect of intimidation is prodigious, no one can doubt. It acts and reacts; and while fear keeps one portion of the people neutral and quiet, the impression that there is, if not a great assent to the agitators, at least little resistance to them, affects the rest of the people until the great mass is quelled, and large numbers are even induced by their alarms partially to join in the unopposed movement.

But, *lastly*, it behoves us to consider how powerful a voice is raised by these facts in condemnation of the sluggish, the selfish, the pusillanimous conduct of those who, by their acquiescence and neutrality, arm a despicable and unprincipled minority with absolute power. And assuredly a warning, as well as a condemnation, proceeds from the same view of the facts; for nothing can be more short-sighted than the policy of those timid or inactive persons who suffer themselves, for the sake of present ease and safety, to be deterred from performing their duty to the community. How deeply blameable were the respectable classes of the French capital in preferring their quiet to their duty, and making no head against the clubs and their

* The Irish demagogues speak of addressing three and four hundred thousand persons in districts where the whole population of all ages amounts to less than half the number.

mob! But how heavy a penalty did they pay for the momentary repose which their cowardice purchased! The Reign of Terror, under which no life was secure for a day; the wholesale butcheries both of the prisoners in September, and by the daily executions that soon followed; the violence of the conscription, which filled every family with orphans and widows; the profligate despotism and national disasters under the Directory; the military tyranny of Napoleon; the sacrifice of millions to slake his thirst of conquest; the invasion of France by foreign troops—pandours, hussars, cossacks, twice revelling in the spoils of Paris; the humiliating occupation of the country for five years by the allied armies, and her ransom by the payment of millions;—these were the consequences, more or less remote, of the Reign of Terror, which so burnt into the memory of all Frenchmen the horrors of anarchy as to make an aversion to change for a quarter of a century the prevailing characteristic of a people not the least fickle among the nations, and to render a continuance of any yoke bearable, compared with the perils of casting it off. All these evils were the price paid by the respectable classes of France, but especially of Paris, for their unworthy dread of resisting the clubs and the mob in 1792.*

Among the lessons taught by the French Revolution, I have not mentioned the obvious one which it inculcates upon all rulers not to disregard the people's rights, nor withhold such reforms as the people have a title to expect, and as the state of the national institutions demands. For this is the inference from the first stage of the great event, and not from that

* How little the French, and especially the Parisians, had profited by these lessons was seen in their conduct when a handful of the mob overthrew the Government in 1848. There is no passage in French history more discreditable to that people. Those who value their ease for the moment so highly, as did the bulk of the community upon that occasion, discover when too late that they have lost it for ever.

last consummation which we have been more immediately occupied with. The power of the clubs and the Paris mob did not at all rest upon the refusal of the Government to give whatever improvements were required by the state of France. No pretext could be urged on any such ground either to justify or to palliate the enormities of those who acted in the sanguinary scenes, or the pusillanimity of those who permitted them to usurp and to abuse supreme power. The utmost latitude had been given to reformation in every branch of the state, long before any attempts were made to subvert the constitutional government; and the success of those attempts had nothing whatever to do with the views or the grievances of Reformers, or with any complaints of the people.

We have now traced the establishment of a system of intimidation to its real sources, the numerical weakness of the Republican party, and their determination to govern the country in spite of the opinions and the wishes of the bulk of the community. They thus succeeded in overthrowing the monarchy, and establishing a republic in its place; but the inevitable consequences of this victory speedily followed. No sooner were they in full and almost undisputed possession of power, than the temper and ambition of individual leaders, seconded by the violence or by the subserviency of inferior persons, their followers, marshalled the Republican body in parties, thirsting for supremacy, animated with bitter, mutual hatred, and wholly unscrupulous about the means which they took to gratify the one passion by usurping the whole powers of government, or the other by destroying their rivals. The Convention was the governing body of the state: its numbers, between seven and eight hundred, were far too great for calm and deliberate discussion; for

unless its proceedings had become regulated, like those of our own Parliament, by long usage, and its members had, like our representatives, acquired by practice the habits of orderly debate, such a body was unwieldy and incapable of sustained deliberation. Even as a legislature this defect was unavoidable, and intimately mixed up with its constitution. But much more was the number of its members wholly incompatible with the functions of a body which possessed the executive as well as the legislative powers, and even interfered with the judicial authority. Hence the want of a vigorous government, in the perils which surrounded the country both from foreign war and from financial embarrassment, rendered it absolutely necessary that the Convention should delegate its powers to smaller bodies; and this led to the appointment of the Committees whose names have become so famous in the history of the times—the Committees of General Security and Public Safety *(De Sûreté Générale* and *De Salut Public)*—of which the latter soon assumed the whole executive power in the state. It consisted of nine, and afterwards of ten, members, among the most eminent of the Jacobin party.

Let it not, however, be supposed that the Convention was a body insignificant from its composition, like the Legislative Assembly. It was far too numerous for action, but it contained the most able and eminent men of the day. In the first place there were fifty-seven of the Constituent Assembly, including twenty-two of the most remarkable of its members—as Robespierre, Siéyes, Prieur de la Marne, Merlin de Douai, Grégoire, Barrère, Boissy d'Anglas. Then there were sixty-six of the Legislative Assembly, much less distinguished men, as might be expected, yet including four or five of eminence—as Condorcet, Merlin de Thionville. Then there were fifty-eight magistrates, some of whom were eminent—as Cambacérès, Bonnier, Rebecqui, Laréveillère Lepaux, Roberjot—almost all

respectable men; seventy-seven advocates, including Danton, Guiton de Morveau, the celebrated chemist, Poulain Grandpré, Ricord, Thibaudeau, Billaud Varennes, Vergniaud; twenty-two physicians, including Fourcroy, Lanthenas, Hardy, Eschasserieux, Dubouchet, Bourgoing; thirteen bishops, including Robert Lindet, Grégoire, Thibault; five Protestant ministers, including Rabaut St. Etienne, Lasonne; nineteen men of letters, almost all of whom had been favourably known by their writings, but Lakanal, Collot d'Herbois, Chénier, Dupuis, Fréron, Fabre d'Eglantine, Mercier, were the most distinguished; to which must be added twenty-six who had become known for their merits, either as men of speculation or action; and in this last class were enrolled the names of Carnôt, Barras, Cambon, Desmoulins, St. Just, Gasparin, Isnard, Legendre, Tallien, Dubois Crancé.

A body thus composed, and chosen by the nation, which, though acting under the influence of the clubs and the mob, yet gave their confidence to the Deputies appointed, certainly possessed resources and power abundantly sufficient for governing the country with vigour; and it soon showed that these powers were intrusted to able hands. The judicious course taken of delegating the whole executive functions to Committees of small numbers, and the firmness with which the Convention's confidence and support were given to those Committees, is above all praise. Their plan of proceeding early adopted, that of receiving reports from these bodies, and raising discussions in the Assembly itself upon the subjects brought forward, had the effect of giving the executive power a constant support from the people, whose interest in the public proceedings was thus kept alive; and the Government acted, or seemed to act, as the organ of the community, while its vigour was proportioned to the narrow limits within which its powers were concentrated. The wonderful exertions made for the public defence, the

progress of the national arms in foreign conquest, the facility with which the whole resources of the state were called forth and employed for the exigencies of its service, powerfully attest the genius which presided over the revolutionary councils, and the vigour which carried them into effect. The Convention was, like the Venetian aristocracy, the ruling power; but its authority was wielded by the Committee, acting like the Council of Ten, while the Revolutionary Tribunal supplied the Inquisitor's place. Happy, if no other motive had animated and actuated the system but a desire to defend France, or even to extend her dominions!—happy, if, with the force which the constitution bestowed, there had not continued to grow and overpower, that terror which had from the earlier times of the Revolution proved the mainspring of all its movements!

Very far otherwise was cast the lot of France under the Republican chiefs who now had clothed themselves with the supreme power to direct all her affairs. The system of intimidation which had raised them to their "bad eminence," was now pursued to retain it, by crushing first, next by exterminating, all the leading men among their rivals or their adversaries. But they began with the royal family; hoping to strike an universal terror into their opponents by the signal example of a king sacrificed to the prevailing faction among his people; not, however, before they had issued a decree, unexampled in the history of the world, by which they promised the aid of their victorious arms to whatever nation chose to throw off the yoke of its rulers, and establish a republican government in the stead of its ancient monarchical institutions. It was thus the declared resolution of the French leaders not only to annihilate all opposition at home among the Royalist party, but to surround their new republic with similar dynasties, in order to perpetuate the domination of their revolutionary principles by rendering them universal.

But although the death of the King had been resolved upon by the Jacobin leaders, and every resource of the clubs and of the municipality was called forth to accomplish this purpose, the greatest difficulties were experienced in the Convention. To surmount these, attempts were made to prevent discussion, and come to an immediate vote. All means were resorted to for hampering the King in his defence. At last the speeches of the members were not permitted to be heard, but were ordered to be given in, written, that they might be read or printed. The able defence of the advocates, and the dignified demeanour of the illustrious victim, produced a great affect both on the Assembly and on the country at large. The Gironde party, which really had the majority in the Convention, were for the most part against a capital punishment; and if the vote had been taken on the sentence, before the vote upon the appeal to the Primary Electoral Assemblies, there cannot be a doubt that this appeal would have been carried in the event of a capital punishment being awarded in the first instance. But the leaders craftily prevented this result, which they foresaw; and the Convention, by a blunder perhaps unexampled in the proceedings of a great body of men acting in their deliberative capacity, suffered the question of the appeal to be decided before the facts were known, or the circumstances had occurred which were calculated most imperatively to govern its decision. Hence the jealousy of the primary Assemblies, and the consciousness that, except in Paris and one or two other great towns, the majority would have voted for an absolute and entire acquittal, induced a great majority to negative the appeal, although a considerable majority would, in all probability, have preferred even that prospect of entire acquittal to the sentence of death, had there been no other alternative. Against the appeal there declared 424 to 283; the vote having been unanimous against an absolute acquittal. The

sentence of death, when the votes came to be analyzed, appeared to have been carried only by the majority of five, 721 having voted out of the 750 who composed the Convention.* There cannot be a more striking proof how little the voice of the country at large went with the proceedings of the Republican leaders, than this large minority in an Assembly chosen under the powerful and universal influence of the clubs and the mobs, and sitting at Paris under the constant exertion of that influence in all its forms.

But the death of the King soon terminated all struggle between the moderate and the extreme parties, placing the former at the mercy of their adversaries in the Convention, and subjecting the Convention itself to the control of the clubs. The establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal paved the way for this soon after the execution of the King. A body of six, acting alternately three and three, as judges, was appointed by the Convention, to try, with the assistance of a jury chosen by the electoral bodies, and of a public accuser named by the Convention. The jurisdiction of this dreadful tribunal extended over all political offences; and the Convention, rather than the public prosecutor, put parties upon their trial before it. The punishment of death was immediately after decreed by law, against all acts, all publications, all writings, tending to restore the monarchy or attack the Republican government; and the superintendence of the public safety was then confided to the celebrated Committee, which has already been mentioned as soon engrossing the whole executive power of the State.†

* One account made the majority five *against*, instead of *for* the sentence; this was certainly erroneous. Another result obtained was the bare majority of one in its favour. The majority of five given in the text is the result in which all are now well agreed.

† *Salut public* has generally been rendered *public safety;* but the word was rather *salvation* of the public, and expressed, indeed, its eminent functions and extraordinary appointment, as if under a pressing exigency to rescue the State from perdition. It was appointed on the 6th of April, 1793,

The Jacobins having in their hands the whole power of this Committee and of the Revolutionary Tribunal, delayed not to use it for the defeat, that is, the extermination of their opponents. After a struggle of a few months, they succeeded in putting the Queen to death by a mock trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal. By a like proceeding they put Custine, one of their very best generals, to death for having surrendered Valenciennes, when it was in fact taken by regular siege, if not by storm. They prevented a Royalist insurrection at Lyons by destroying a great part of that noble city, and massacreing many hundreds of its inhabitants. They procured the execution of the Gironde leaders, Brissot, Vergniaud, and twenty others; and they sacrificed in like manner, to their thirst of vengeance and lust of power some of the most eminent soldiers and philosophers of France, Luckner, Houchard, Bailly, Lavoisier, to whom may be added Barnave, the successor of Mirabeau, as the greatest orator of the Assembly,* and the virtuous and accomplished Rolands.

The destruction of the Brissotine or Gironde party left the Convention entirely under the power of the Jacobins; and it was now found that the Committee of Public Safety, while it ruled the State, exercising over the Convention an uncontrolled influence, had fallen under the power of Robespierre and two adherents, who proved his devoted partizans on all occasions, Couthon and St. Just. The other members of the Committee confined themselves each to his particular department; thus Carnôt conducted the whole operations of the war, and with a success so brilliant,

on the proposition of Isnard, one of the most able, daring, and enthusiastic of the Republican chiefs, and an adherent of the Gironde party, in whose proscription he shared, though he escaped death by flight. He was of a highly respectable family of Grasse, still among the first in that town. I have the pleasure of knowing them well, from living in their neighbourhood.

* Vergniaud appears to have been quite his equal.

that the only legitimate influence possessed by the Committee rested upon the fame which they thus acquired in exalting the national glory. The terror which they inspired by the sanguinary proceedings of the Revolutionary Tribunal, was no doubt the main source of their power. But it may well be questioned whether, without the victories of their armies on every part of their frontier from the Ebro to the Scheldt, they could have sustained their ascendancy; and it is certain that any great reverses, which should again have exposed the capital to the risk of invasion, would speedily have wrought their overthrow, and opened men's eyes to the tyranny under which they were fain to crouch while danger was afar off.

Although Robespierre* was all-powerful in the Committee, resting as he did upon the Jacobin Club, over which he ruled with an absolute dominion; and although the Committee exercised an equal sway over the Convention, which, however, gave its confidence to the genius and the boldness that directed all the executive councils, making the war an uninterrupted series of victories, there soon appeared among its members men, not belonging to the Committee, but eminent for their services in the Revolution, and distinguished for their capacity and disposition to assert their claims, and aspire to a share in the supreme power. It could not, indeed, be said that any regular party had been formed in opposition to the Committee of Public Safety, because the spirit of patriotism which generally prevailed, making men forget all but the interests of the country, that is, of the revolutionary system, rendered all faction odious, and branded it with the name of treason. Yet the Committee did not contain all the

* As his rise had throughout been gradual, even slow, and aided by no sudden strokes of boldness, nor furthered by any brilliant talents, he only became a member of the Committee about the end of July, having before the 26th of that month belonged to the Committee of General Defence, which afterwards merged in that of Public Safety.

great men of the day; and the exclusion of some soon produced its wonted effect of sowing the seeds of discontent, leading towards resistance on the one side, and jealousy, tending to persecution on the other. While such men as Danton,* Tallien, Camille Desmoulins, Bourdon de l'Oise, were deprived of all share in the government, the Triumvirate of Robespierre could not deem themselves secure.

Accordingly, after the fall of the Gironde had been followed by continual trials and condemnations, terms almost convertible in those dismal times, when hundreds of victims had fallen a sacrifice to the dictator's thirst of power and dread of resistance, the kindlier nature of Danton, long outraged by such dreadful scenes, revolted; and Camille entirely joining him in these natural feelings, the tyrant became alarmed. An interview took place, at which their reconcilement was attempted by common friends, alarmed at so perilous an event as their open rupture must prove to the dominant party. Robespierre received Danton's representations with haughty reserve; showed no disposition to be cordially reconciled; indicated on the contrary an impression that the breach might widen without any loss to his party; and left Danton with such a conviction of his doom being sealed, that he said he perceived his fate approaching, but warned Robespierre that it would draw after it his own destruction. A remarkable incident occurred at this meeting. When Danton spoke of the innocent lives that had been sacrificed to the system of terror, Robespierre coldly asked, "Et qui vous aura dit qu'un seul innocent a péri?"† — to which Danton, turning to the friend who had accom-

* Danton's exclusion, however, was voluntary: he had declined the proposal to be named upon the Committee, and sick of the excesses into which the Revolution was plunging, rather than alarmed at its prospects, had retired for some months to his native place, Arcis-sur-Aube, where he had an inconsiderable estate.

† "And who has been telling you that a single innocent person has perished?"

panied him, said, with a smile, the bitterness of which must have made a deep impression on the relater, for all the histories, and memoirs, and treatises have noted it, "Qu'en distu? Pas un innocent n'a péri!"*

The sacrifice of Danton, Camille, and their friends, soon after put the seal upon the tyrant's power, and completed the subjection of the whole Convention, whose members, terrified at the approach of death, should they either differ or be suspected of differing with the Triumvirate, for the most part ceased to attend, insomuch that of the seven hundred and fifty composing it, not above two hundred usually appeared in their places. The executions now reached the enormous amount of fifty and sixty a-day; the most marvellous levity was shown in condemning and executing even persons against whom not the shadow of a proof was offered; constantly by mere mistake one was taken for another; sometimes persons were hurried into the fatal cart which conveyed the victims to the scaffold, merely because the appointed numbers were not complete. But the vilest passions of individuals were also gratified,—their malignant spite or their sordid avarice. It would be endless to recite the instances which abound of these things in this the darkest page of French history, which make even the days of St. Bartholomew assume a lighter aspect. Thus the parties to a bill of exchange connected with counter-revolutionary proceedings were all brought before the tribunal, and all condemned to die in the mass. M. Berryer, a celebrated lawyer, and father of the famous Carlist leader in our times, happened to call on a notary named Martin, a highly respectable man, wholly unconnected with politics. A few hours after he had seen him in his office, M. Berryer met the cart carrying its miserable lading to the place of punishment, and to his unspeakable horror saw M. Martin among the victims. He

* "There's for you!" or, "What say you to that? Not a drop of innocent blood has been shed!"

was executed. On inquiry it was found that his name had been appended to the bill to authenticate a notarial act—that is, the protesting of the bill—with which therefore he not only had no more concern than the paper-maker or ink-seller, who had furnished the materials of the instrument, but he actually had rather been concerned in a proceeding against its validity. All the parties to it had been condemned in their absence; and the only question put to M. Martin was, whether he acknowledged his handwriting. On his answering in the affirmative, he was told that the sentence applied to him, and must be executed.* A respectable man, M. Frecot de Lantz, of eighty years old, bedridden for twenty years, and so deaf that he was wholly unable to hear the questions put at his trial, was condemned and executed for having conspired against the republic. The public prosecutor, Coffinhal, among other rude and revolting pleasantries, said to the jury, "Il faut en finir. Vous voyez bien qu'il conspire *sourdement*."†

A wretch called Heron, a fraudulent bankrupt, who, driven to South America, brought back a fabricated order of the Spanish Government for six thousand pounds, which no Paris banking-house would discount, denounced ten or twelve of the first bankers merely because they had refused to honour his forgery. Some were executed, others paid vast sums for their escape, Couthon declaring that the public "owed to Heron the discovery of some of the worst, because the wealthiest,‡ conspirators;" and another member of the Convention protesting that he never knew

* Souvenirs de Berryer, vol. i. p. 213.

† "We must make an end of this. You see plainly enough that he conspires *deafly*."

‡ *Négotiantisme* was a known offence in the Reign of Terror, and meant to indicate the tendency of wealth towards regular and lawful government; just as *Modérantisme* was the offence of disliking anarchy, and violence, and blood.

a better revolutionist.* For the escape of one banker, M. Magon de la Balue, an unknown person, bringing passports ready signed, but in blank, demanded twelve thousand pounds. It was refused, and the miserable man, against whom, except the miscreant Heron's tales, there existed not the shadow of a charge, much less any proof, was hurried to the scaffold.† The incidents are numberless of a similar malignant rancour, or sordid cupidity; and no doubt can remain of the facilities which the sanguinary course of the Committee afforded for gratifying all such vile propensities.

Then as if the Revolutionary Tribunal afforded too little scope for the perpetration of wholesale murder, new expedients of blood were devised. A law was propounded to increase the number of victims, by making four Revolutionary Tribunals sit at the same time, and condemning persons without hearing their defence. It had, as early as October, 1793, been decreed that if any trial lasted three days and no sentence was passed, the tribunal might declare its conscience satisfied, close the proceedings, and pronounce judgment. In the June following came the consummation of injustice, the incredible law that if the tribunal was satisfied either with moral conviction or material proof, it might without evidence proceed to condemnation. Advocates were by the same infernal law denied to parties accused, for the reason assigned, that the patriotic jurors were the protectors of all patriots,‡ and that conspirators

* Souvenirs de Berryer, vol. i. p. 168.

† Ibid, p. 173.

‡ In Robespierre's hand-writing the draught was found of one of these detestable laws. Its preamble sets forth the delays which had occurred from the difficulty of convicting eminent persons, and the scope thus afforded to aristocratic tumults and counter-revolutionary intrigues; and it gives as the ground of the new law, that "it is at once absurd and contrary to the institution of the Revolutionary Tribunal to subject to eternal procedure crimes of which a whole nation is the denouncer, and the universe the witness."—It then requires the president to open the fourth

deserved no assistance! These laws soon raised the number of victims to seven and eight hundred in a month.*

The revolutionary mode of proceeding, when once adopted at Paris, was extended to the tribunals in the provinces. Indeed we find the constitution of the revolutionary tribunal of Orange planned some weeks before the new system was established in the capital. These are the remarkable directions for its proceedings —concise enough, and abundantly significant:—"Ce tribunal jugera révolutionnairement, sans instruction écrite, et sans assistance de jurés. Les témoins entendus, les interrogations faites, les pièces à charge lues, l'accusateur public entendu, le jugement sera

day's sitting with a question to the jury, "Is their conscience sufficiently informed?" (*éclairée*); and on an affirmative answer, he is immediately to pronounce sentence. He is also peremptorily required to suffer no questions (*interpellations*), nor any other incident inconsistent with this law. (*Papiers Inédits*, vol. ii. p. 1.)

* In April, May, June, July, 1793, the number of executions was only 41. In the five following months it had risen to 206,—viz.; four times as many. In the first three months of 1794 it was 281, or above double that of the former period. But it then went on awfully increasing, so that in May it was 324; in June 672; and in July 895, without reckoning Robespierre and his party, executed at the end of that month. As many as 67 perished in one day, 7th of July. It is a most remarkable fact that a very great proportion of the persons thus put to death were of the most obscure station, and many were women of very advanced age; nor can there be a doubt that the guillotine ministered to the craving of personal and family cupidity, or spite. In the provinces, especially in the south, the same bloody scenes were enacted: the fiery temperament of the people increasing in those parts the violence of faction. Some places are noted for the fury with which the passions were inflamed. At Orange, near Avignon, in Provence, the worst atrocities were perpetrated. Orgon, in the same country, exposed Napoleon's life to imminent hazard when he made his retreat to Elba in 1814. As late as 1830, the people of Orange were so split into violent parties, that each family was divided against itself. Nor can the traveller at this day fail to mark, as he but passes, the fierce aspect of its inhabitants. The atrocities, however, committed by the monster Carrier at Nantes, where the Loire was literally dyed with Royalist blood, have long attained the dreadful eminence of almost making the other cruelties of the time be forgotten. Orange is the chief place of the principality of the Nassau branch, and which gave William III. his title.

prononcé."* There is an entire omission of the defence, and of all evidence in exculpation.† It is remarkable that though the six members to compose this sanguinary court were carefully selected, with power to divide themselves into two courts for expediting their horrid business, not many days elapsed before some of them showed symptoms, if not of tenderness, yet at least of regard for justice, and of reluctance to commit wholesale murder. The president, Fauvetz, writes to Payan, the national agent of the municipality of Paris, who suffered with Robespierre, that their proceedings, though affording a brilliant contrast with that of the Tribunal of Nîmes—having in six days sentenced 197 persons, which was more than they had done at Nîmes in as many months—were yet hampered and thwarted by the over-scrupulous nature of three of their members; one of whom, Fonrosa, is too fond of forms, and though an "excellent person, yet falls somewhat short of the revolutionary point:" another, Meilleret, "utterly useless in the post he fills, so far as sometimes to acquit counter-revolutionary priests, and to require proofs of guilt, as in the ordinary courts of the old régime."—"God grant," ejaculates the pious chief judge, "that Ragot, Ternex, and myself, who are up to the right pace (qui somnes au pas), may not be taken ill! Should such a misfortune happen, the tribunal would only distil pure water, and be at best on a level with the ordinary courts of the country."

This account of the peculiar structure of Fonrosa's understanding, which made him slow in putting innocent men to death, drew from Payan a most warm but affectionate remonstrance; which we find among

* "This tribunal shall try in the revolutionary manner, without written indictment, and without jury. After hearing the witnesses, interrogating the accused, reading the documents in support of the charge, and hearing the public prosecutor, sentence shall be pronounced."

† Papiers Inédits, vol. i. p. 101.

the documents appended to Courtois's Report. After referring to his own long experience in such proceedings, he earnestly beseeches him to consider the entire difference between a revolutionary and an ordinary tribunal; that it is wholly immaterial to ask whether or not the accused has been heard patiently, and at length, in his defence; but only whether he is guilty or not: and that in considering this, the judge's conscience is to stand in the place of all the old forms. He exhorts him not to be afraid of the innocent suffering, but only of the guilty escaping; affirming that whoever has not been for the Revolution has been against it, and simply because he has done no public service: and he reminds him that whoever escapes punishment will one day be the death of many Republicans. In fine, he tells him, "You have a great mission to fulfil. Forget that nature has made you a man, and endowed you with feelings" (*oublie que la nature te fit homme et sensible*): "remember that all those who affected to be wiser and more just than their colleagues were either crafty conspirators or weak dupes, unworthy of the Republic; and choose between the love and the hatred of the people." He closes this singular letter by professions of the purest esteem, which, he says, has dictated it, and by calling on his correspondent to read it over and over again (*sans cesse*), and "especially before trying the wretches whom he has to destroy."* Fonrosa's answer to this letter, justifying himself, would seem to show that there was but a slender foundation for the charge made against him. He only appears to have required that some note should be kept of the names and designations of the parties tried, of the heads of the charges, and of the principal points of the evidence. The small number of clerks, however, rendered this a serious interruption to the work of blood;

* Rapport de Courtois, p. 397.

and hence the impatience of all such formalities testified by the chief judge, to whose letter of complaint I have adverted.

It is needless to multiply examples: but the proceedings at Lyons require a few words. We have, among many other records of these tragical scenes, the correspondence of the principal actor in them, Collot d'Herbois. To some of the letters Fouche's name is also appended; but he has, in private at least, positively denied the authenticity of the subscription, as we shall afterwards see in Lord Stanhope's valuable note.

The accomplishment of Collot's grand object, the destruction of Lyons, is obstructed by the vast number of the inhabitants—150,000; and both he and Couthon are found planning the dispersion of some 100,000 of them over the country, where they might mingle with the Republican population, and become partakers of its civic virtues. However, as far as man could act in such circumstances, Collot boasts of his progress; and he lays down his principles:—"We have revived the action of a Republican justice," he says, "prompt and terrible as the will of the people! It must strike traitors like the lightning, and only leave their ashes in existence! In destroying one infamous and rebellious city, you consolidate all the rest. In causing the wicked to perish, you secure the lives of all generations of freemen. Such are our principles. We go on demolishing, with the fire of artillery and with the explosion of mines, as fast as possible. But you must be sensible that, with a population of 150,000 inhabitants, these processes find many obstacles. The popular axe cuts off twenty heads a-day, and still the conspirators are not daunted. The prisons are choked with them. We have erected a Commission, as prompt in its operations as the conscience of true Republicans trying traitors can possibly be. Sixty-four of these were shot yesterday on the spot where they had fired

on the patriots; two hundred and thirty are to fall this day in the ditches where their execrable works had vomited death on the Republican army. These grand examples will have their effect with the cities that remain in doubt; where there are men who affect a false and barbarous sensibility, while ours is all reserved for the country."*

Such, in Paris and the provinces, were the proceedings of the Reign of Terror, while the Triumvirate, Robespierre, Couthon, St. Just, bore sway, until at length the discovery of a list, in which many deputies were proscribed and marked for execution, roused the Convention from its slumber of fear, overthrew the tyrants, and restored something like security and freedom to the legislature and the people of Paris; while the analogous proceedings of the provincial clubs and tribunals were also suspended.

We may now pause awhile to contemplate the character, intellectual as well as moral, and to scan the views of the singular men who played the chief parts in that terrible drama, of which we have been observing the successive scenes. And of one thing we may rest fully assured, that they commit a great mistake who ascribe, as was very generally done at the time, no motives but those of mere sanguinary cruelty or insane ambition to their conduct. That with most of them their proceedings degenerated into

* The admixture of private with public feeling is found in this, as in all the other pieces of the Jacobin correspondence; and Robespierre, generally called "*Maximilian*," or "*Our dear Maximilian*," is the object of constant solicitude and tenderness.—"All those," continues Collot, "who have traversed the revolution with a firm step (that is, unruffled by 'false and barbarous sensibility') are inseparably united together. It is the love of their country that cements the fraternal friendship which knits their hearts together. Give the assurance of my friendship, entire and unalterable, to your Republican family. Squeeze, in my name, Robespierre's hand. Your son, a good citizen, a happy father, already strong in the principles in which he has been brought up," &c. "What a satisfaction for Republicans, the fulfilment of these duties!"

such courses—that the more savage and selfish parts of their nature finally prevailed, and bore them away from every humane affection or virtuous principle, may be very true; and yet most of them began with being the dupes of exaggerated patriotism and public spirit, the sport of a political and philosophic fanaticism; and it was only after these dangerous excesses had steeled their minds against the ordinary impulses of our nature, that they gave themselves up to the propensities of a more vulgar ambition, and indulged in the more common gratification of personal hatred or vengeance. That a familiarity with scenes of blood, both in the field and on the scaffold, had produced its natural effect in hardening the heart, and that the fanatical sentiments of enthusiasm had borne their appointed fruit, of making the sufferings and even extinction of others disregarded when they were the means working towards the end so vehemently desired, can nowise be doubted.

The records of the Reign of Terror bear constant witness to these positions. But perhaps no such testimony is stronger than that of the correspondence published after Robespierre's downfall in May, 1794; to parts of which I have already referred. The Committee of Public Safety had, according to its usual policy of having an emissary to aid or to control the national representative in every important place, sent M. Julien to Bordeaux, where Ysabeau was suspected of being lukewarm, and to Nantes, where Carrier had rendered himself remarkable for an unscrupulous excess of zeal—an excess, however, which does not appear to have created any very unfavourable feelings towards him on the part of the executive government. We find this emissary writing confidentially to Robespierre, respecting the monster Carrier and his atrocious murders; but not a word of execration finds or forces its way into his narrative. He speaks of Royalist soldiers butchered, and of the Loire flowing red with

blood; but it is only to express his sorrow for the pestilence engendered by the heaps of corpses, and for the impediments occasioned to the navigation of the river. Whether it be that he dared not reprobate the acts of patriotic butchery, even in writing to his colleague, for fear his letter should be read, and expose him to the fury of zealous citizens, or that he really was callous to all feelings of humanity, needs hardly be inquired into; the inference is the same on either supposition.* The same silence is to be remarked in the correspondence respecting Collot d'Herbois's massacres at Lyons; or rather, Julien brings it as a charge against Ysabeau that he had spoken disrespectfully of those celebrated *fusillades*.† A like remark arises upon a fact communicated by Lord Stanhope, which the reader will find in his interesting notes upon Fouché. When that famous revolutionary leader was denying his share in the proceedings at Lyons, and was reminded of the reports published in his name jointly with his associate Collot, his answer was that "to have merely contradicted his having the share ascribed to him in the massacres would have exposed him to destruction,"—that is, because it would have betokened a disapproval and repudiation of the honour intended to be done him.

* *Papiers Inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, vol. iii. p. 44. This work is of the deepest interest. When the Triumvirate were overthrown at the revolution of the 9th and 10th Thermidor, there were found many papers in the repositories of Robespierre, St. Just, and others. A committee was charged to draw up a report, and Courtois made it to the Convention. It was printed in one volume. But in 1828 the suppressed papers were published in three volumes, with Courtois's Report.

† *Papiers Inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, vol. iii. p. 27. Julien, or as he afterwards called himself Julien de Paris, was a very young man when he had this mission to the provinces. He died a few years ago; and was distinguished in his after life by great zeal for philanthropic institutions. There appeared nothing remarkable in him, if it be not a certain feebleness of character joined to a somewhat restless activity; but he very probably laboured under a consciousness of the service being known in which he had been engaged.

But though all these scenes ended in perverting the nature of the actors, and even in some degree of the spectators, the chiefs of the Revolution were originally of a better temper, and actuated by purer feelings. This is even, to a certain extent, true of Robespierre, the most remarkable of them all; but it is true of him in a very much lesser measure than of any other revolutionary chief except St. Just.

ROBESPIERRE.

It would be difficult to point out within the whole range of history, ancient or modern, any person who played so great a part as Robespierre with so little genius. Those who were not brilliant, whose parts were not such as dazzle the vulgar, and thus, by bestowing fame and influence, smooth the way to power, have generally possessed some depth of intellect, some mental force which compensated, and far more than compensated, the want of shining faculties; or, if their intellectual endowments were moderate, they have by a splendid courage struck awe into the hearts of mankind; or at least by extraordinary vigour and constitutional firmness of purpose, they have overpowered, though more slowly, all resistance to their will, and with constancy won their way to the head of affairs. Nor are instances wanting, and perhaps Henry IV. of France is the most remarkable, of amiable dispositions gaining the affections of men, and making up for the want of any very extraordinary gifts either of a moral or an intellectual kind. But in Robespierre we can trace not a vestige of any such kinds of excellence, if it be not that he was unremitting in his pursuit of aggrandizement, and had as much firmness in this regard as was consistent with a feeble and cowardly nature. Nor is the secret of his rise to be found in the circumstances of the times; these were common to all candidates for power; and he who outstrips all competitors must have some superiority over them, natural or acquired, to account for his success.

It may be admitted, in all probability, that his vices had at the peculiar crisis a chief part in the mastery which he obtained; and his early possession of a secret more imperfectly known to others, perhaps only to him in its entirety, was that which, when coupled with those great vices, enabled him to act his extraordinary part. He, from the dawn of the Revolution, saw with perfect clearness and precision the disposition of the multitude to be roused, their power when excited, and the manner in which to excite them most surely. He perceived with unerring certainty the magical effect of taking extreme courses, gratifying their disposition to excess, freeing them by removing all restraints, and, above all, avoiding the risk of quenching the flame by any interposition of moderate councils, any thwarting of the spirit that had been raised. The perfectly unscrupulous nature of his mind, the total want of all kindly or gentle feelings, the destitution of even common humanity when the purpose of gratifying the propensity to violence was to be accomplished, and the seperadded excitement of the war to make the mob first his tools, and then his slaves, enabled him to satiate that thirst, first of fame, then of destruction, which swiftly became a fiercer thirst of power, and while it could hardly be slaked by any draughts of the intoxicating beverage, clothed him with the attributes of a fiend, towards all who either would interrupt, or would share his infernal debauch.

The frame of his mind was eminently fitted for sustaining as well as devising the part which he played. From his earliest years he had never been known to indulge in the frolics or evince the gaiety of youth. Gloomy, solitary, austere, intent upon his work, careless of relaxation, averse to amusement, without a confidant, or friend, or even companion, it is recorded of him that at the College of Louis le Grand, where he was educated with Camille, Fréron,

and Le Brun, he was never seen once to smile. As a boy and a youth he was remarkable for vanity, jealousy, dissimulation, and trick, with an invincible obstinacy on all subjects, a selfishness hardly natural, a disposition incapable of forgiving any injury, but a close concealment of his resentment till the occasion arose of gratifying it, and till he dared to show it in safety. It would have been difficult to bring into the tempest of the Revolution qualities more likely to weather its fury, and take advantage of its force. But he lacked the courage which alone can enable any man long to "ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm;" for his nature was essentially base and timid, the frame of his body corresponding to the paltriness of his soul. Nature had likewise given warning to the beholder by marking his aspect with a singular ugliness and meanness, which the ravages of the small-pox rendered still more forbidding.

With these defects, and that entire want of generous, or kindly, or even ordinarily human feelings which they betoken or cause, he possessed some qualities which mainly contributed to his elevation, first from the obscurity of a not very eminent practitioner at the not very celebrated bar of Arras, to distinction in the Constituent Assembly; and afterwards from the position of a second-rate debater* to the supreme power in the state, which he wielded during by far the most critical period of French history in any age. His thirst, first of distinction to gratify his inordinate vanity, and then of power to feed the ambition that had grown up in so rank and poor a soil, was unbounded, and, possessing his whole soul, left no place for any rival principle of action, no avenue open to any natural feeling which might dispute for mastery with the ruling passion. From his earliest years, when the question was merely of vanity, this

* This underrating applies to his powers as a debater only. His eloquence was unquestionable as a speaker.

was his nature; and viewing all rivals, all obstacles, as only to be extirpated and destroyed, he would have killed, if he dared, the competitors for a college prize or a school reward, as remorselessly as he afterwards exterminated the Brissots, the Héberts, and the Dantons, who crossed the path of his ambition. Vanity often prepares the soil for ambition; but generally like a crop which is to be consumed before the more important growth begins, with which that base weed seldom is seen to grow up. But the personal conceit of Robespierre kept pace with his love of dominion; affronts offered to it caused many of his murders; nay, its indulgence seriously affected his power, and it is more than probable hastened his downfall. For the festival in honour of the Supreme Being, the precursor of his fate, and a main assistance to his enemies, was wholly unnecessary for re-establishing religion, and, except ministering to his personal vanity, gained no object but that of exciting distrust and alarm among the infidel parts of the community, without at all reconciling the votaries of Christianity.

From the entire occupation of his mind by the prevailing propensity, proceeded, of course, his exclusive devotion to its gratification.* It may be questioned whether in the whole course of his life Robespierre was for an instant unoccupied with the subject—whether he ever wasted one thought upon any other. The effect of this absolute devotion is incalculable. It supplies many deficiencies; it gives force to very moderate strength of mind; it calls forth the whole resources of the individual; it nerves the faculties with a vigour for want of which far ampler powers

* My late learned and able friend M. Lakanal, in his valuable notes upon his Colleagues of the Revolution, heads a few remarks on Robespierre with this line—

"Hoc genus est hominum cupiens præcellere cunctis;"

as if he deemed personal vanity the distinguishing characteristic of the dictator's nature.

are paralyzed; as an insignificant bullet fired from a gun will destroy, when a cannon-ball thrown by the hand falls innocuous at the feet of the object.

From the same exclusive devotion to the one pursuit of his whole existence arose also the utter disregard of all other gratifications, aided possibly by an extremely cold temperament. With the exception of wine, in which he at one period of his life indulged, in order, probably, to soothe his constitutional irritability, and assist the morbid digestion that shed a sallow hue over his repulsive features, he never was known to partake of any sensual indulgence.* But the austerity of the republican character, which he so greatly affected, also precluded all ordinary pleasures; and he carried this, which cost him nothing, to the same excess with most of his colleagues, excepting only that, in the article of dress, his petty personal vanity made him shun the squalid attire of the other Jacobins, and affect something of the old garb of good society. Nay, his room, a handsome *boudoir*, was filled with pictures, prints, and busts of his own frightful person; and he is supposed to have worn green spectacles for the purpose of concealing the timid movements of his eyes.† Avarice he had none, not because with his habits money was an useless incumbrance, for we often see the passion of acquiring keep such pace with that of hoarding wealth, that all use of the treasure so keenly sought after is out of the question; but avarice was no vice or weakness of his, and it would have been as hard to bribe him from his path with money as to make him compromise his principles, or assumed principles, for place.

* A connexion has been supposed to have existed between him and the daughter of the family with which he lodged; but for this there is no foundation whatever.

† The *Mémoires de Barbaroux*, p. 63, gives a similar account of his *boudoir*, but denies the statement of Helen Maria Williams, that his sight was good, and required no glasses.

He soon acquired, and even retained, the name so popular at all times, in revolutions so omnipotent, of "*Incorruptible.*"* How came it to pass that while all, or nearly all, were equally careless of money; while the terrible Committee, with the disposal of uncounted millions, limited their whole salary and whole expenditure to eight shillings a-day, and all ended their lives in the greatest distress—he alone should be called the "*Incorruptible?*" The reason is to be sought for elsewhere than in the freedom from pecuniary corruption; for his possessing the feature common to them all never would have formed a mark of distinction. But as he had early perceived the power of the people—that is, the power of the multitude acting on or overawing the people; so had he observed almost as early the favour in their eyes of extreme courses; of the unhesitating pursuit of one principle without the least

* I have not thought it worth while in the text to make any remark upon the only pretence anywhere to be found of a charge against Robespierre's honesty in money matters. It is a letter printed in the Report of Courtois, as having been found among his papers; and it is evidently a fabrication. The reader will find it at p. 221, forming the lxi. piece of the Appendix; it is also given in the *Papiers Inédits*, tom. ii. p. 156. It purports to be a letter from some one unknown, at some place also unknown, respecting funds supposed to have been entrusted to him for the purpose of facilitating Robespierre's escape. The first sentence convicts its author of gross and daring forgery. Who in such circumstances would do more than allude to the funds under his care? But the writer is made to say, "les effets que vous m'avez fait adresser pour continuer le plan de faciliter votre retraite dans ce pays-ci"—(the money you sent me in order to carry on the plan of facilitating your escape into this country.) He then speaks of Robespierre as about to fly from a "theatre where he must soon appear and disappear for the last time;" and goes on to show him how near the scaffold the elevation to the chair of the Convention (probably meaning at the festival in honour of the Deity) had brought him. It proceeds thus: "Since you have succeeded in providing yourself here with a large sum (*un trésor*) sufficient to support you for a long time, as well as those for whom I have received money from you, I shall expect you impatiently, that we may laugh together over the part you will have played in a nation as credulous as it is fond of novelty." Surely a more gross and clumsy fabrication never was attempted, nor does its publication reflect credit either on the Government that published it, or the Report in which it appeared. The improbability of Robespierre's keeping such a letter in his repositories is of itself sufficient to destroy its credit.

deviation to suit the temporary purposes of expediency, or the least temporizing to consult prudential views, whether of individual advantage or of public safety; and he saw that as whoever most rigidly conformed his course to this canon, so whoever went farther than others, outbidding them in violence and in blindness to all the advantages of compromise, was sure to carry away the chief favour of the unreflecting multitude. By this view was his conduct always guided; and as the people were ever sure to find him foremost among the more violent, ever at the head of those who would sacrifice all considerations to the favourite maxims, falsely called the *principles*, of the day—laying all prudence on the shelf—giving moderation to the winds—flinging peace to the dogs, the dogs of war—now crying "*perish the colonies*,"—now, "*perish commerce*"—and ever ready to wade through blood, the best blood of France, towards the attainment of the darling equality and unbridled licence of the multitude—he was for this hailed as the "*Incorruptible*" that no one could ever doubt on any question which side he would take, and no one could expect others to outstrip his zeal and determination.

There remain some remarkable proofs and illustrations, of unquestionable authenticity (for they are under his own hand), of the extremes to which he had made up his mind, and the enmity which he bore to all the reputable classes of society. The correspondence of his emissaries in various quarters is filled with the like indications. Aristocracy, counter-revolutionary principle, royalism itself, appear not to excite more alarm and hostility among them than mere wealth; and hence *négotiantisme* equally with *modérantisme* is taken for a sure symptom of *incivisme*, and places those who have it alike under grave suspicion. The design of a crusade against property, a general levelling of condition as well as an equality of all civil rights, has been often imputed to Robespierre, and

apparently without sufficient foundation. It is certain that such a scheme, an agrarian division of property, was one of the main tenets of the Hébertiste or Cordelier party, against whom he made the greatest exertions, exertions which speedily led to their destruction. But his hatred of the middle classes, and constant appeals to the multitude against the *bourgeoisie*, can in nowise be doubted; and it forms the burthen of his song in many pieces found after his death. Thus, in a kind of civic catechism we find the question, "Who are our enemies?" answered with "The vicious and the wealthy." Again, "What favours their attacks upon us?"—"The ignorance of the multitude, or lower classes" (*sans-culottes.*) In another piece we find this doctrine—"Les dangers intérieurs viennent des bourgeois; pour vaincre les bourgeois il faut rallier le peuple—tout étoit disposé pour mettre le peuple sous le joug des bourgeois—ils ont triomphé à Marseille, à Bordeaux, à Lyon; ils auroient triomphé à Paris sans l'insurrection actuelle. Il faut que l'insurrection actuelle continue—il faut que le peuple s'allie à la Convention, et que la Convention se serve du peuple—il faut que l'insurrection s'étende de proche en proche sur le même plan; que les sans-culottes soient payés et restent dans les villes. Il faut leur procurer des armes, les colerer, les éclairer."*

Of the talents of Robespierre I have already spoken in general; but it remains to examine a little more in detail his claims of distinction as a speaker and a writer.

* "Our internal perils arise from the middle class; to overcome that class we must rally the people. Everything was prepared for subjecting the people to the yoke of the middle class; that class has triumphed at Marseilles, at Bordeaux, at Lyons; it would have triumphed at Paris, but for the present insurrection. This insurrection must continue. The people must ally itself with the Convention, and the Convention must make use of the people. The insurrection must spread gradually on the same plan; the lower classes must be paid to remain in the houses; they must be furnished with arms, enraged, enlightened."—*Papiers Inédits*, vol. ii. pp. 13, 15.

There is some difficulty in separating the two characters, because in his time written speeches were far more frequently used than spoken; yet we are not left without proofs of his powers as an orator.

It has been customary with contemporary authors, and especially with those of our own country, to rate his capacity very low; and some with whom I have conversed of his colleagues, represent him as a cold and very second-rate speaker (*médiocre*), whose oratory consisted in a tissue of commonplaces, with dissertations on virtue, crime, conspiracy, though with a prevailing vein of sarcasm and considerable power of epigram or antithesis. These have described him as very barren of ideas, and by no means possessing facility of composition—which indeed the manuscripts found on his death seemed to prove by the constant and repeated alterations that prevailed through them all. It is to be observed, on the other hand, that General Carnôt expressly gave as one of the means by which he rose to power, his facility of speech and of composition: "D'abord (I remember he said) il avoit les paroles à la main."* Nor can we rely much in opposition to this upon the undoubted fact that, when accused by Louvet and Barbaroux, he asked for a week to prepare his defence. The delay in all probability had a very different object from that of making his speech. He was willing that the impression produced by the charges, and by the ability shown in their support, should be allowed to wear out at a time when sudden resolutions were not so often taken as afterwards, and therefore he could safely postpone his defence; and above all he was most likely working with his faithful Jacobins, to defeat the accusation and carry him through, whatever might be the effect of the debates in the Convention.

It seems, however, that we are not left to conjecture

* "In the first place, he had a perfect command of words."

on his powers as a speaker, even as a debater. Inferior he certainly was to the greatest who appeared in the Revolution, as Mirabeau, Barnave his successor, and Vergniaud, perhaps the highest of the three. But we have abundant proof of his coming very near them, at least in effective declamation, and proof that in readiness he was not easily surpassed. Let two instances suffice; but they are remarkable ones, and they are decisive.

Dupont, an adherent of the Lameth party, used insulting gestures towards him. He calmly said, addressing the chair, "M. le Président, je vous prie de dire à M. Dupont, de ne pas m'insulter, s'il veut rester auprès de moi."* Then turning alternately to Dupont and the Lameths, he proceeded:

"Je ne présume pas qu'il existe dans cette Assemblée un homme assez *lache*, pour transiger avec la cour, sur un article de notre code constitutionnel (all eyes were fixed on the party of Lameth)—assez *perfide* pour faire proposer par elle des changemens nouveaux, que la pudeur ne lui permettroit pas de proposer lui-même (much applause and looks again directed towards Dupont and the Lameths)—assez *ennemi de la patrie* pour chercher décréditer la constitution parcequ'elle mettroit quelque borne à son ambition ou à sa cupidité (more applause)—assez *impudent*, pour avouer aux yeux de la nation qu'il n'a cherché dans la révolution que des moyens de s'aggrandir et de s'élever. Car je ne veux regarder certains écrits et certains discours qui pourroient présenter ce sens, que comme l'explosion passagère du dépit déjà expié par le repentir. Non; du moins nous ne serons ni assez stupides, ni assez indifférens, pour consentir à être le jouet éternel de l'intrigue, pour renverser successivement les diverses parties de notre ouvrage au gré de quelques ambitieux."† Then rais-

* "President, I beg you would tell M. Dupont not to insult me if he would remain near me."

† "I do not believe that there exists in this Assembly a man *base* enough

ing his voice, "Je demande que chacun de vous jure qu'il ne consentira jamais à composer avec le pouvoir exécutif sur aucun article de la constitution sous peine d'être déclaré traître à la nation."* The effect of this speech was electrical, as may well be imagined. The Lameth party had long been on the decline, and this proved their destruction.

The great struggle between the Mountain and the Gironde began with a debate in which Robespierre made a very successful attack upon them; but Vergniaud's reply, notwithstanding the extreme applause which attended his adversary's, greatly exceeded it in power, and won over even many of the Mountain to his side. Very different was the result of the hot conflict between the same redoubtable chiefs on the famous 31st of May, 1793. While Robespierre was going on, "Non! il faut purger l'armée! Il faut"—Vergniaud impatiently interrupted him with "Concluez donc"—whereupon Robespierre instantly turned on him, and continued, "Oui! je vais conclure, et contre vous!—contre vous, qui, après la révolution du 10 Août, avez voulu conduire à l'échafaud ceux qui l'ont faite!—contre vous, qui n'avez cessé de provoquer la destruction de Paris!—contre vous, qui avez voulu sauver le tyran!—contre vous, qui avez conspiré avec Dumouriez!—contre vous, qui avez poursuivi avec

to bargain with the Court upon an article of our constitutional code—*perfidious* enough to propose making through the Court new changes which shame will not suffer themselves to propound—*enemy* enough to the country to attempt discrediting the constitution because it restrains their ambition or their avarice—*impudent* enough to avow in the nation's eyes that they have not sought in the Revolution the means of their own elevation and aggrandizement; for I will not regard certain writings and certain speeches, that might bear this construction, as anything but the passing explosion of spite already expiated by repentance. No; at least we shall not be so stupid nor so indifferent as to let ourselves be made the eternal sport of intrigue, in order to overthrow, one after another, all the parts of our work at the pleasure of a few ambitious men."

* "I demand that every one of you swear that he never will consent to make a compromise with the executive power upon any article of the constitution, on pain of being declared a traitor to the nation."

acharnement les mêmes patriotes dont Dumouriez demandait la tête!—contre vous, dont les vengeances criminelles ont provoqué les mêmes cris d'indignation dont vous voulez faire un crime à ceux qui sont vos victimes! Eh bien! ma conclusion c'est le décret d'accusation contre tous les complices de Dumouriez, et contre tous ceux qui ont été désignés par les pétitionnaires!"* The Gironde party were undone; Brissot and twenty others of their leaders were immediately put on their trial, condemned, and executed.

No one at all acquainted with the rhetorical art can deny to these passages merit of the highest order. Above all, no one acquainted with the conduct of debate can doubt that they are precisely the kind of passages most surely calculated to awaken, to gratify, to control an assembly deliberating on the actual affairs of men. The speaker who thus delivered himself was plainly gifted with extraordinary eloquence; and however he may have dwindled down to a frigid, sententious, unimpressive rhetorician upon occasions of an *epideictic* kind, occasions of mere display like the fête in honour of the Supreme Being, or even when in the Convention his personal vanity and desire of oratorical renown made him overdo his part, it is certain that he was capable of excelling in the art; that he did excel on those great occasions which are fitted to call forth its highest displays; and, sure test of excellence, that he rose with the difficulties opposed

* "No! we must purge the army! we must——"

"Conclude, then."

"Yes! I am about to conclude—and against *you!*—against *you*, who, after the Revolution of the 10th of August, would fain have sent to the scaffold its authors—against *you* who have never ceased to plot the destruction of Paris—against *you* who would have saved the tyrant—against *you* who have conspired with Dumouriez—against *you* who have pursued with bitterness the same patriots whose heads Dumouriez demanded—against *you* whose criminal vengeance has provoked the same cries of indignation which you make a charge upon your victims! Well then, my conclusion is a decree of accusation against all Dumouriez's accomplices, and against all those denounced by the petitioners."

to him, meeting with superior power the more pressing exigencies of the occasion.

That Robespierre may be tried by this test, we naturally turn to his great speech on the 8th Thermidor, the eve of his downfall; that speech of which we shall presently see that Cambacérès pronounced a very high panegyric to Napoleon, himself rather disposed to admire the revolutionary Dictator. It is a production of the highest merit, and manifestly elaborated with extraordinary care as well as skill in oratory. The passage respecting the fête in honour of the Supreme Being is, for a popular Assembly, perhaps, too splendid, and might be deemed exaggerated; but the taste of the speech generally is correct and severe. That he had in various passages the masterpieces of the ancient orators in his mind, can admit of no doubt; but there is nothing to be seen like servile imitation; and even in the instance which most reminds us of the original ("Non! nous n'avons pas été trop sévères! J'en atteste la République qui respire! J'en atteste la représentation nationale environnée du respect dû à la représentation d'un grand peuple!"—and ending with "On parle de notre rigueur, et la patrie nous reproche notre faiblesse"),* we find nothing nauseous in the imitation, but so fruitful a series of illustrations from the actual state of things, that all notion of pedantic recourse to Demosthenes is put to flight. There is also throughout the speech a tone of deep feeling, which was not natural to the speaker, and probably was awakened by the peculiarity of his unprecedented position, and the extreme singularity of the crisis in which he spoke.

* "No! we have not been too severe! I call to witness" (or, "bear witness") "the Republic, which still breathes! I call to witness" (or, "bear witness") "the national representation surrounded with the respect due to the representatives of a great people! They speak of our vigour, and the country reproaches us with weakness."

Nor will the inference be in the least altered if it shall be supposed that these great passages were not quite so extemporaneous as they at first seem to be. It may very possibly be suggested that, in anticipation of some such occasion, he might have been ready with a summary, a powerfully condensed and exquisitely-elaborated summary, of the charges against the party of the Lameths in the one case and of the Gironde in the other. The same may be said of many of the most brilliant and most successful feats of modern eloquence, as it may of all, or nearly all, the more exquisite oratory of the ancients. But the power of skilfully and suddenly adapting to the posture of the moment, and introducing and using naturally on the sudden, the fruit of previous study, is one of the most difficult parts of the orator's art; one which is the latest learnt and the most rarely employed with signal success. An examination of other parts of Robespierre's speeches has led me to the same conclusion to which a consideration of these passages plainly conducts us; and I conceive that his great eminence as a speaker and an occasional writer stands entirely indisputable.

It is known that he owed whatever success we allow him as a speaker to the indefatigable industry of his nature, which overcame the natural impediments of a harsh discordant voice, mean and hateful aspect, slow and hesitating enunciation. His first efforts were complete failures; failures sufficient to dishearten any one not embarked in the quest of distinction with his whole heart, and concentrating all his force in that single pursuit. It was only by slow degrees that he became capable of drawing any attention — became tolerable to his audience. It was also by great labour that he continued to maintain his position as a speaker; and even when his facility had been exceedingly increased by diligent practice and by his eminent position, it was at all times by an effort that he ac-

complished his purpose. His whole manner was as bad as possible.*

Whether Robespierre originally had formed the design of rising to supreme power, or only began to conceive it after events which he could not foresee might seem to place it within his reach, has sometimes been made a question, and, as it appears to me, very erroneously. No person ever began his public life with such a plan by which to shape his conduct, and Robespierre most certainly only at first thought of making himself a name and a place among men of political eminence, nor dreamt of rising above all others until the events of August and September, 1792, gave him a prospect of such distinction. With the defects by which his progress was obstructed, his personal defects and want of physical as well as moral courage, any hopes of overtopping all his more gifted competitors must at first have been wholly out of the question.

But it is a much more difficult matter to determine how far he originally felt any of the Republican enthusiasm, how far he really entertained any of the levelling principles, which inspired and guided the authors of the first Revolution. His nature was singularly alien from any warmth of temper likely to engender enthusiasm; yet he may, from his misanthropic feelings and hatred of all above him, have really acquired something like a zealous antipathy to the established institutions of the country, and something approaching to a fanatical desire for their subversion. It is very possible that at first such feelings may have influenced his conduct; and it is certain that the gratification of his prevailing propensities—first, the thirst of distinction, then the love of power, was quite compatible with indulging in these hostile feelings: nay, that the two indulgences were such as mutually to aid and to pan-

* I have, from a most able and skilful critic in an exalted station, an accurate account of his voice and manner—nothing can possibly be worse. —(The late King of the French here alluded to.)

der for each other. The political and religious enthusiasm which some lenient critics of his life have ascribed to him, had assuredly no other existence. It would be very greatly to exalt his character, were we to give him credit for anything like fanaticism in the more ordinary acceptation of the term.

That he went fully into the system of proscription, at least for a certain period, cannot be doubted; but there seems every reason to disbelieve the remark wittily made after Danton's death, "Que Robespierre avait mis la Convention en coupe réglée." * On the contrary, it appears unquestionable that he had become really alarmed at the rapid progress of legal execution, and was desirous of stopping, but was embarrassed with the extreme difficulty and even danger of doing so, and thus was placed between two great perils, or two fears, when he found himself, like Macbeth—

> "So far in blood stept in,
> That turning were as tedious as go o'er."

His absenting himself for six weeks not only from the Convention, but from the Committee of Public Safety, attending the Jacobin Club alone, and preparing that extraordinary speech which he delivered on the day before his downfall, is a fact which cannot fail to operate in his favour; and although he most probably was kept informed, by Couthon and St. Just, of all that passed, he certainly has, in consequence of his absence, considerably less responsibility than his colleagues for the dreadful carnage which attended the close of the Decemviral reign. Napoleon told Mr. O'Meara, whose authority is wholly unimpeachable,† that he had himself seen letters of Robespierre to his brother, representative of the people with the army of Nice, which proved his determination to bring the

* "That he treated the Convention like a forest which was to be cut down successively by fixed portions."

† I happen to know facts unknown to Mr. O'Meara when he was writing Napoleon's allusions to those same facts, *e. g.* Secret Negotiations with Spain in 1806; and thus those allusions were to him unintelligible.

Reign of Terror to an end. That he was cut off in the midst of some such plan, which he wanted nerve to execute, is highly probable. That he was condemned without a hearing, and clamoured down by an intrigue of his colleagues Billaud and Collot, whose destruction he had planned, appears to be quite certain. When Cambacérès, an acute observer, and a perfectly candid witness, was asked his opinion of the 9th Thermidor by Napoleon, whose estimate of Robespierre was not unfavourable, he said, "C'était un procès jugé, mais non plaidé." * And he added, that the speech of the day before, which began the struggle, was "tout rempli des plus grandes beautés." † To his habitual and constitutional want of courage it seems clear that the tyrant's fall must be ascribed. His heart failed not in the Convention, when he vainly strove to be heard, and ended by exclaiming, "Encore une fois! Veux tu m'entendre, Président d'assassins?" ‡ But the moment was now past for resisting the plot of his adversaries, and saving himself by destroying them. He had not in time taken his line, which was to sacrifice Billaud and Collot, and perhaps Tallien; and then at once to close the Reign of Terror and abolish the Revolutionary Tribunal. This course required a determination of purpose and a boldness of execution which were foreign to his mean nature, happily for the instruction of mankind; because had he, like Sylla, survived the bloody tyranny in which he had ruled, and, much more, had he laid down the rod, like the champion of the Roman aristocracy, the world, ever prone to judge by the event, and to esteem more highly them that fail not, would have held a divided opinion, if not pronounced a lenient judgment, upon one of the most execrable and most despicable characters recorded in the annals of our race.

* "It was a cause decided, but not tried."
† "Filled with the greatest beauties."
‡ "Once more, President of Assassins, wilt thou hear me?"

In fine, that he was, beyond most men that ever lived, hateful, selfish, unprincipled, cruel, unscrupulous, is undeniable. That he was not the worst of the Jacobin group may also be without hesitation affirmed. Collot d'Herbois was probably worse; Billaud Varennes certainly, of whom it was said by Garat, "Il fauche dans les têtes, comme un autre dans les prés."* But neither of these men had the same fixity of purpose, and both were inferior to him in speech. Both, however, and indeed all the revolutionary chiefs, were his superiors in the one great quality of courage; and while his want of boldness, his abject poverty of spirit, made him as despicable as he was odious, we are left in amazement at his reaching the place which he filled, without the requisite most essential to success in times of trouble, and to regard as his distinguishing but pitiful characteristic the circumstance which leaves the deepest impression upon those who contemplate his story, and in which he is to be separated from the common herd of usurpers, that his cowardly nature did not prevent him from gaining the prize which, in all other instances, has been yielded to a daring spirit.

Such was Robespierre—a name at which all men still shudder. Reader, think not that this spectacle has been exhibited by Providence for no purpose, and without any use! It may serve as a warning against giving way to our scorn of creatures that seem harmless because of the disproportion between their mischievous propensities and their powers to injure, and against suffering them to breathe and to crawl till they begin to ascend into regions where they may be more noxious than in their congenial dunghill or native dust! No one who has cast away all regard to principle, and is callous to all humane feelings, can be safely regarded as innocuous, merely because, in addition to other defects, he has also the despicable weakness of being pusillanimous and vile.

* "He mows down heads as another would grass."

DANTON.

A MAN of Robespierre's character, and with his great defects as a revolutionary chief, may be able to raise himself in troublous times to great eminence, and possibly even to usurp supreme power, but he never can take the lead in bringing great changes about; he never can be a maker of the revolutions by which he may however profit. His rise to distinction and command may be gained by perseverance, by self-denial, by extreme circumspection, by having no scruples to interfere with his schemes, no conscience to embarrass, no feelings to scare him; above all, by taking advantage of circumstances, and turning each occurrence that happens to his account. These qualities and this policy may even enable him to retain the power which they have enabled him to grasp; but another nature and other endowments are required, and must be added to these, in order to form a man fitted for raising the tempest, and directing its fury against the established order of things. Above all, boldness, the daring soul, the callous nerves, the mind inaccessible to fear, and impervious to the mere calculations of personal prudence, almost a blindness sealing his eyes against the perception of consequences as well to himself as to others, is the requisite of his nature who would overturn an ancient system of polity, and substitute a novel regimen in its place. For this Robespierre was wholly unfit; and if any man can more than another be termed the author of the French Revolution, it is Danton, who possessed these requisites in perfection.

There can hardly a greater contrast be found between

two individuals than that which this remarkable person presented in all respects to Robespierre. His nature was dauntless; his temper mild and frank; his disposition sociable; naturally rather kind and merciful, his feelings were only blunted to scenes of cruelty by his enthusiasm; which was easily kindled in favour of any great object; and even when he had plunged into bloodshed, none of the chiefs who directed those sad proceedings ever saved so many victims from the tempest of destruction which their machinations had let loose. Nor was there anything paltry and mean in his conduct on those occasions, either as to the slaughters which he encouraged or the lives which he saved. No one has ever charged him with sacrificing any to personal animosity, like Robespierre and Collot d'Herbois, whose adversaries fell before the Revolutionary Tribunal, or those against whom offended vanity made them bear a spite; and it is certain that he used his influence in procuring the escape of many who had proved his personal enemies. His retreat to Arcis-sur-Aube, after his refusal to enter the Committee of Public Safety, and finally his self-sacrifice by protesting against the sanguinary course of that terrible power, leave no doubt whatever resting upon his general superiority in character and in feelings to almost all the other chiefs.

His natural endowments were great for any part in public life, whether at the bar, or in the senate, or even in war: for the part of a revolutionary leader they were of the highest order. A courage which nothing could quell; a quickness of perception at once and clearly to perceive his own opportunity, and his adversary's error; singular fertility of resources, with the power of sudden change in his course, and adaptation to varied circumstances; a natural eloquence springing from the true source of all eloquence—warm feelings, fruitful imagination, powerful reason, the qualities that distinguish it from the mere rhetorician's

art, — but an eloquence hardy, caustic, masculine; a mighty frame of body;* a voice overpowering all resistance; — these were the grand qualities which Danton brought to the prodigious struggle in which he was engaged; and ambition and enthusiasm could, for the moment, deaden within him those kindlier feelings which would have impeded or encumbered his progress to eminence and to power. That he was extremely zealous for the great change which he so essentially promoted, cannot admit of a doubt; and there is no reason whatever for asserting that his ambition, or any personal motive, overtopped his honest though exaggerated enthusiasm. The zeal of St. Just and Camille Desmoulins was, in all probability, as sincere as Danton's; but they, especially St. Just, suffered personal feelings to interfere with it, and control their conduct to a very much greater extent; and their memory, especially St. Just's, is exposed to far more reproach for their conduct in the bloody scenes to which the Revolution gave birth.

The speeches of Danton were marked by a fire, an animation, very different from anything that we find in those of Robespierre, and the other leaders of the Revolution, except perhaps Isnard, the most ardent of them all. In Danton's eloquence there appears no preparation, no study, nothing got up for mere effect. We have the whole heart of the man poured forth; and accordingly he rises upon any incidental interruption, and is never confounded by any tumult or any attack. In one particular, as might be expected from his nature, he stands single among the great speakers of either France or England — the shortness of his

* It was his own expression, "La Nature m'a donné en partage les forces athlétiques et la physiognomie âpre de la Liberté." (Nature has given me for my portion the athletic strength and harsh expression of Freedom.) He was marked with the small-pox like Robespierre, but had a masculine countenance, broad nostrils, forward lips, and a bold air wholly unlike his. The great personage who in so striking a manner described Robespierre, gave Danton also, and to the life.

speeches. They are, indeed, harangues prompted by the occasion; and we never lose the man of action in the orator. If we were to look for a specimen of his manner, perhaps none could be found better or more characteristic than his reply to the attack made upon him by Lasource, whom the Gironde put forward to charge him with his known partiality for Dumouriez. Danton was then the recognized leader of the Mountain; and the fierce struggle between that party and the Gironde having begun, the latter deemed it a great advantage to connect their adversaries, through him, with Dumouriez, whose treason was now avowed. The success of Danton's defence was complete, and paved the way for the subsequent denunciation of the Gironde. The speech is full of extempore bursts which have great merit, and produced an extraordinary impression. It may suffice to give the passage in which he denounced the Gironde. It follows his sudden retort on the cry that he was playing with Dumouriez the part of Cromwell. The success of that retort appears to have suggested and sustained the denunciation:—

"Si donc ce n'est que le sentiment profond de vos devoirs qui a dicté son arrêt de mort (Louis XVI.); si vous avez cru sauver le peuple et faire en cela ce que la nation avait droit d'attendre de ses mandataires: ralliez-vous, vous qui avez prononcé l'arrêt du tyran, contre les lâches (*turning to the right—the Gironde*) qui ont voulu le sauver; serrez-vous, appelez le peuple à se réunir en armes contre les ennemis du dehors, et écraser ceux du dédans; confondez par la vigueur et l'immobilite de votre caractère tous les scélérats, tous les aristocrates, tous les modérés, tous ceux qui vous ont calomniés dans les départemens. Plus de composition avec eux! (*Extraordinary applause, in which the galleries joined.*) Reconnaissez-le tous, vous qui n'avez jamais sû tirer de votre situation politique dans la nation le parti que vous auriez pu en tirer, qu'enfin

justice vous soit rendue. Vous voyez par la situation où je me trouve en ce moment la nécessité où vous êtes d'être fermes, et déclarer la guerre à tous vos ennemis, quels qu'ils soient. (*Renewed applause.*) Il faut former un phalange indomptable. Ce n'est pas vous, puisque vous aimez les sociétés populaires et le peuple; ce n'est pas vous qui voudrez un roi. (*More shouts; loud cries of* Non! non! *from the great majority of the Convention.*) C'est à vous à en ôter l'idée à ceux qui ont machiné pour conserver l'ancien tyran. Je marche à la république—marchons-y de concert: nous verrons qui de nous ou de nos detracteurs atteindra le but."*

The great power of this declamation is incontestable. His concluding sentence savoured of the exaggeration and defective taste which marked many of his harangues:—

"Je me suis retranché dans la citadelle de la raison; j'en sortirai avec le canon de la vérité; et je pulvériserai les scélérats qui ont voulu m'accuser."†

* "If, then, it be the profound sense of duty which dictated the condemnation of the King—if you conceived that you thereby saved the people, and thus performed the service which the country had a right to expect from its representatives—rally, you who pronounced the tyrant's doom; rally round me against the cowards who would have spared him; close your ranks; call the people to assemble in arms against the enemy without, and to crush the enemy within; confound, by the vigour and steadfastness of your character, all the wretches, all the aristocrats, all the moderates, all those who have slandered you in the provinces. No more compromise with them! (*Immense applause, in which the galleries joined.*) Proclaim this, you who have never made your political position available to you as it ought to be, and let justice at length be done you! You perceive, by the situation in which I at this moment stand, how necessary it is that you should be firm, and declare war on all your enemies, be they who they may. (*Renewed applause.*) You must form an indomitable phalanx. It is not you, who love the clubs and the people, that desire a King. (*Loud cries of* 'No! No!') It is your part to root out such an idea from such as have contrived to save the former tyrant. For me, I march onwards to a republic; let us all join in the advance; we shall soon see which gains his object—we or our slanderers!"

† "I have entrenched myself in the citadel of reason; I shall sally forth with the artillery of truth; and I shall crumble to dust the villains who have presumed to accuse me."—It must be remarked that such

Such violent metaphors of a vulgar class Danton could venture upon, from his thundering voice and overpowering action. In another they would have excited the ridicule from which those physical attributes rescued them in him.

A charge of corruption has often been brought against Danton, but, it should seem, upon inadequate grounds. The assertion of Royalist partizans that he had stipulated for money, and the statement of one that he knew of its payment, and had seen the receipt (as if a receipt could have passed), can signify really nothing, when put in contrast with the known facts of his living, throughout his short public career, in narrow circumstances, and of his family being left so destitute that his sons are at this day leading the lives of peasants, or, at most, of humble yeomen, and cultivating for their support a small paternal farm in his native parish. The difference between his habits and those of the other great leaders gave rise to the rumours against his purity. He was almost the only one whose life was not strictly ascetic. Without being a debauched man, he indulged in sensual pleasures far more than comported with the rigid republican character; and this formed one of the charges which, often repeated at a time when a fanatical republicanism had engendered a puritan morality, enabled Robespierre, himself above all suspicion of the kind, to work his downfall.

The patriarchs of the Revolution, who till lately survived, and whom I knew, such as M. Lakanal, always held Danton to be identified with the Revolution, and its principal leader. In fact, the 10th of August, which overthrew the monarchy, was his peculiar work. He prepared the movement, headed the body of his section (the Cordeliers) in their march first through the

passages as the former, in all languages, are hardly possible to translate; for they are more or less conversational in their diction, and exceedingly idiomatic. The fustian of the last extract is more easy to render. These extracts are from the official Report, as are the notes of the effect produced.

Assembly, demanding, with threats of instant violence, the King's deposition, then attacking the palace to enforce their requisition. When, soon after that memorable day, the Prussians were advancing upon Paris, and, in the general consternation, the Assembly was resolved to retreat behind the Loire, he alone maintained his imperturbable presence of mind, and prevented a movement which must have proved fatal, because it would have delivered over Paris to the Royalists and the allied armies. The darkest page in his history, however, swiftly follows his greatest glory. He was Minister of Justice during the dreadful massacres of September, and he was very far from exerting his power to protect the wretched victims of mob fury. On that occasion was pronounced his famous speech already cited on the necessity of bold measures —a speech by which he was long known, and will be long remembered, throughout all Europe. Other traits of his vehement nature are still recorded. When interrogated at his trial, his answer was, "Je m'appelle Danton; mon séjour sera bientôt le néant; mon nom vivra dans le panthéon de l'histoire."* When taking leave of his young and fair wife, and for a moment melted to the use of some such expressions as, "Oh, ma bien aimée! faut-il que je te quitte?"†—suddenly recovering himself, he exclaimed, "Danton, point de faiblesse! Allons en avant!"‡—And the same bold front was maintained to the end. His murder was the knell of Robespierre's fate; and while choked with rage on his own accusation, and unable to make himself heard, a voice exclaimed, "C'est le sang de Danton qui t'étouffe!"§ But it must be admitted to have been a fine, a just, and an impressive lesson

* "My name is Danton; my residence will soon be in annihilation; my name will live in the Pantheon of history."

† "Oh, my well beloved! must I quit thee?"

‡ "Danton! no weakness! lead on!"

§ "It is the blood of Danton that chokes you!"

which, goaded by the taunt, the tyrant, collecting his exhausted strength for a last effort, delivered to his real accomplices, the pusillanimous creatures who had not dared to raise a hand, or even a voice, against Danton's murder—"Lâches! que ne le défendiez-vous donc?"* On the scaffold, where Danton retained his courage and proud self-possession to the last, the executioner cruelly and foolishly prevented him from embracing, for the last time, his friend Hérault de Seychelles, a man of unsullied character, great acquirements, and high eminence at the bar, as well as of noble blood:† "Fool!" exclaimed Danton indignantly, and with the bitter smile of scorn that often marked his features, "Fool! not to see that our heads must in a few seconds meet in that basket!"

The fall of Danton and of his faithful adherent Camille has ever been regarded as one of the most surprising events in the Revolution. His habitual boldness, and the promptitude with which he always took and pursued his course, seems for the moment to have forsaken him; else surely he could have anticipated the attack of the Committee, which was fully known beforehand. The Triumvirate had become generally the objects of hatred and of dread. The Gironde, though broken and dispersed, and hostile to Danton, as well as to the other partizans of the Mountain, were the last men to approve the course which had been followed since the destruction of their leaders, and were anything but reconciled to mob government (which they had always detested and scorned), by the desperate excesses to which it had led. On the scattered fragments of that once powerful party, then, he might well have relied. Even if he was ignorant of the impatience which Tallien, Bourdon de

* "Cowards! then why did you not defend him?"

† He was nephew of Madame de Polignac, favourite and confidante of the Queen, through whose influence he had been appointed to a high legal situation.

l'Oise, Legendre, and others, felt under the Triumviral domination, and which the two former had not yet perhaps disclosed, he never could have omitted the consideration that some of them, especially Legendre, had before, and prematurely, given vent to their hostile feelings towards Robespierre, and were therefore sure to display them still more decidedly now that he was so much less powerful, and had so much more richly earned their aversion.

As for the charges against Danton, they were absolutely intangible: the speech of Robespierre, and report of St. Just, presented nothing like substantial grounds of accusation, even admitting all they alleged to be proved. Their declamation was vague and puerile, asserting no offence, but confined to general vituperation; as that he abandoned the public in times of crisis, partook of Brissot's calm and liberticide opinions, quenched the fury of true patriots, magnified his own worth and that of his adherents: or flimsy and broad allegations of things wholly incapable of proof; as that all Europe was convinced of Danton and Lacroix having stipulated for royalty, and that he had always been friendly towards Dumouriez, Mirabeau, and d'Orleans. The proposition of Legendre, to hear him before decreeing his prosecution, was rejected by acclamation; and the report of St. Just against him, though, by a refinement of injustice, as well as an excess of false rhetoric, addressed to him in one continued apostrophe of general abuse an hour long, was delivered and adopted in his absence, while he was buried in the dungeons of the state prison. The Revolutionary Tribunal, for erecting which he asked pardon of God and man, having nothing like a specific charge before them, much less any evidence to convict, were daunted by his eloquence and his courage, which were beginning to make an impression upon the public mind, when the Committee sent St. Just down to the Convention with a second report, alleging a new conspiracy, called

the *Conspiration des Prisons*—an alleged design of Danton and his party, then in custody, to rush out of the dungeons, and massacre the Committee, the Jacobin Club, and the patriots in the Convention: liberate young Capet, that is, Louis XVII., and place him in Danton's hands. Upon this most clumsy fabrication, every word of which refuted itself, it was at once decreed that the tribunal should proceed summarily, and prevent any one of the accused being heard who should resist or insult the national justice—that is, who should persist in asserting his innocence.* Sentence and execution immediately followed.

These circumstances make it apparent that Danton's supineness in providing for his own safety by attacking the Committee first, must have proceeded from the ascendant which the Triumvirate had gained over his mind. Originally he had a mean opinion of Robespierre, holding him void of the qualities which a revolutionary crisis demands. "Cet homme-là [was his phrase] ne saurait pas cuire des œufs durs."† But this opinion was afterwards so completely changed, that he was used to say, "Tout va bien tant qu'on dira Robespierre et Danton; mais malheur à moi si on dit jamais Danton et Robespierre."‡ Possibly he became sensible to the power of Robespierre's character—his ever persisting in extreme courses, and plunging onwards beyond any one, with a perfect absence of all scruples in his remorseless career. But his dread of such a conflict as these words contemplate, was assuredly much augmented by the feeling that the match must prove most unequal between his own honesty and openness, and the practised duplicity of the most dark, the most crafty of human beings.

* This proceeding, of stopping the accused's mouth when on his trial, was termed putting a person *hors des débats*.

† "That man is incapable of boiling eggs hard."

‡ "All will go well as long as men say, 'Robespierre and Danton;' but woe be to me if ever they should say 'Danton and Robespierre.'"

The impression thus become habitual on his mind, and which made him so distrustful of himself in a combat with an adversary like the rattlesnake, at once terrible and despicable, but whose rattle gives warning of the neighbouring peril, may go far to account for his avoiding the strife till all precaution was too late to save him. But we must also take into our account the other habitual feeling, so often destructive of revolutionary nerves; the awe in which the children of convulsion, like the practisers of the dark art, stand of the spirit they have themselves conjured up; their instinctive feeling of the agonistic throes which they have excited in the mass of the community, and have armed with such resistless energy. The Committee, though both opposed from without and divided against itself, still presented to the country the front of the existing supreme power in the state; it was the sovereign *de facto*, and retained as such all those preternatural attributes that "do hedge in" monarchs even when tottering to their fall: it therefore impressed the children of popular change with the awe which they instinctively feel towards the Sovereign People. Hence Danton, viewing in Robespierre the personification of the multitude, could not at once make up his mind to fly in the face of this dread power; and his hesitation enabled his adversaries to begin the mortal fray, and win their last victory. Plainly, it was a strife in which the party that began was sure to carry the day.

The history of Danton, as well as that of Robespierre, both those passages wherein they were jointly successful, and those in which one fell beneath the power and the arts—the combined force and fraud—of the other, is well calculated to impress upon our minds that, in the great affairs of the world, especially in the revolutions which change its condition, the one thing needful is a sustained determination of character; a mind firm, persevering, inflexible, incapable of bending to the will of another, and ever controlling circumstances,

not yielding to them. A quick perception of opportunities, a prompt use of them is of infinite advantage; an indomitable boldness in danger is all but necessary: nevertheless Robespierre's career shows that it is not quite indispensable; while Danton's is a proof that a revolutionary chief may possess it habitually, and may yet be destroyed by a momentary loss of nerve, or a disposition to take the law from others, or an inopportune hesitation and faltering in recurring to extreme measures. But the history of all these celebrated men shows that steady, unflinching, unscrupulous perseverance—the fixed and vehement will—is altogether essential to success. "*Quod vult, id valde vult*," said one great man formerly of another, to whom it applied less strikingly than to himself, though he was fated to experience in his own person that it was far from being inapplicable to him of whom he said it. It was the saying of Julius Cæsar respecting Junius Brutus, and conveyed in a letter to one who, celebrated, and learned, and virtuous as he was, and capable of exerting both boldness and firmness upon occasion, was yet, of all the great men that have made their names illustrious, the one who could the least claim the same habitual character for himself. Marcus Tullius could never have risen to eminence in the Revolution of France, any more than he could have mingled in the scenes which disgracefully distinguished* it from the troubles of Rome.

* The only respect, perhaps, in which this can justly be asserted is the profanation of judicial forms, and the deliberate course of misrule pursued in France by the leaders, and submitted to by the people. The massacres of Marius and Sylla were far more sanguinary, but they were the sudden and passing effects of power—mere acts of military execution. The scene in France lasted much above a year.

CAMILLE DESMOULINS.—ST. JUST.

THE great leaders whom we have been contemplating had each a trusty and devoted follower, Danton in Camille and Robespierre in St. Just; and these in some sort resembled their chiefs, except only that St. Just was more enthusiastic than Robespierre, and was endowed with perfect courage, both physical and moral.

Camille had long before the Revolution ardently embraced republican opinions, and only waited with impatience for an opportunity of carrying them into effective operation. He was a person of good education, and a writer of great ability. His works are, excepting the pamphlets of Sièyes, the only ones, perhaps, of that countless progeny with which the revolutionary press swarmed, that have retained any celebrity. The very names of the others have perished, while the periodical work of Camille, the 'Vieux Cordelier,' is still read and admired. This exemption from the common lot of his contemporary writers, he owes not merely to the remarkable crisis in which his letters appeared, the beginning of general disgust and alarm at the sanguinary reign of the Triumvirate; these pieces are exceedingly well written, with great vigour of thought, much happy classical allusion, and in a style far more pure than the ordinary herd of those employed who pandered for the multitude.

But the merit of Camille rises very much above any literary fame which writers can earn, or the public voice can bestow. He appears ever to have been a friend to milder measures than suited the taste of the times, and to have entirely agreed with Danton in his

virtuous resistance to the reign of blood. At the very beginning of the Revolution he had contributed mainly to the great event which launched it,—the attack upon the Bastille. He harangued the people, and then led them on, holding two loaded pistols in his hands. He also joined Danton in the struggle which the Mountain made against the Gironde, and is answerable for a large share in the proscription of that party, firmly believing, as Danton did, that their views were not purely revolutionary, and that their course must lead to a restoration of the monarchy. He was at first, too, a promoter of mob proceedings and the mobs that regulated them, his nickname being the "Procureur Général de la Lanterne."* But there ended his share in the bloody tragedy which followed; and he regarded with insurmountable aversion the whole proceedings of the Triumvirate. Nevertheless, Robespierre, who had resolved upon his destruction because of his intimate connexion with Danton, so far entered into his views of relaxing the speed of the proscriptions, as to approve of the earlier numbers of the 'Vieux Cordelier,' which he revised and corrected before their publication. There is even good reason for believing that Camille might have escaped the proscription which involved Danton and his party, through the disposition of Robespierre not having been very unfavourable to him, because it seems certain that his doctrine in favour of returning to more moderate courses, was not so much dreaded by that terrible chief as by others, especially St. Just. But a sarcastic expression in which he indulged, at the expense of that vain and remorseless fanatic sealed his doom. St. Just was always puffed up with his sense of self-importance, and showed this so plainly in his demeanour that Camille said he "carried his head like the holy sacrament" (*le Saint Sacrement*)—"and I," said St. Just, on the sneer being

* Attorney-General of the Lamp-Post.

reported to him, which has the merit of giving a very picturesque description of the subject, "and I will make him carry his head like St. Denis," alluding to the legend of that saint having walked from Paris to his grave carrying his head under his arm.

Camille met death with less boldness than might have been expected. His indignation at the gross perfidy and crying injustice to which he was sacrificed, enraged him so as to make his demeanour less calm than his former courage would have prescribed, or than his friend Hérault de Seychelles desired. "Montrons, mon ami," said he, "que nous savons mourir."* He showed, on other occasions, some infirmity, but it arose from the tenderness of his domestic feelings.

It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of Camille, that he was wholly precluded by an incurable hesitation from speaking in public, and consequently could take no part in debate. Nothing can show more conclusively than the station to which he rose in the annals of the Revolution, that oratory, mere speaking, bore a far more inconsiderable part in the conduct of affairs, than it usually does in the administration of popular governments. The debates of the Convention were for the most part short, full of quick and sudden allusions, loaded with personalities and abounding in appeals to the popular feelings, but with few long or elaborate speeches. The principal pains appear to have been bestowed upon the reports of the Committees, which were eagerly listened to and produced a great effect, by the importance of their subjects and the authority of the bodies from whom they proceeded. In general, the debates resembled more the practical discussions of men engaged in action than the declamations or the arguments of debaters. Thus oratory was of less avail than might have been expected in the action of so popular a government. It should seem

* "Let us show, my friend, that we know how to die."

that such a government must be settled before eloquence can have its full scope. "Pacis comes, otiique socia, et jam bene constitutæ reipublicæ alumna eloquentia."*—(*Cic.*) Other qualities raise a man above his compeers while the popular tempest rages. A fixed purpose, a steady pursuit of one object, an assurance given to the people that he may be relied upon at all times and to every extent, a constant security against all wavering, a certainty that no circumstances in his conduct will ever leave anything to explain or account for, nay, a persuasion that nothing unexpected by those whose confidence his past life has gained will ever be done, so as to excite surprise and make men exclaim, "Who could have thought it? This from him! Then what next?"—these are the qualities which far outweigh all genius for debate in the troublous times that try men's souls, fill all minds with anxiety, and open the door to general suspicion.

Without any gifts of wealth or of station, without even the common faculty of expressing himself in public, with no professional or other station to sustain him, a man necessarily unknown, at first altogether, and afterwards only known by his firm will, his devotion to republican principles, and his steady adhesion to one party and one chief, Camille became one of the leading men in the Convention and the State, and had gained this high position before he was known as a writer of singular powers; for his celebrated letters were only produced towards the very close of his life. It was, no doubt, an additional cause of his elevation, and probably first recommended him to the public favour which he had so little means of improving, that he began early to support the revolutionary movement, and had, before the great events of 1789, declared himself a friend of republican

* The companion of peace, the ally of ease, eloquence is the child of a government already well settled.

principles. So it was with Couthon, a provincial advocate in Auvergne, and as unfitted for action by a paralytic stroke, which deprived him of the use of his limbs, as Camille was by the stutter which deprived him of the use of his tongue. Yet Couthon formed the third of the famous Triumvirate which exercised for above a year—an age in revolutionary times—the dictatorship of France. He is represented as a person of an engaging aspect and noble presence, notwithstanding the grievous infirmity with which he was stricken. When any measures of peculiar severity were to be propounded, he was always chosen by the Committee to bring them forward, and he was remarkable for uttering the most atrocious and pitiless sentiments in a tone and with a manner the most affectionate and tender. Like most of his colleagues, he practised on great occasions some of those strokes for stage effect that so powerfully affect the minds of the multitude, and of the French more than perhaps any other, being confounded with the sublime, and bordering generally upon the ludicrous. When the destruction of Lyons had been decreed, he had himself carried to the great place, and gave the signal for the work of demolition with a hammer, and the command or sentence in these words, "Je te condamne à être démolie au nom de la loi."*

The nature of the debates in the Convention has been already adverted to. They were constantly interrupted by the utmost violence of individuals and parties, so as to set at nought all attempts of the President to keep any semblance of order. The scene was often one of perfect confusion, in which his bell tolled in vain, and his hat was in vain put on, and he occasionally left the chair in despair of maintaining even the outward appearance of order. The two cardinal points, upon which hinge the whole regularity

* "I condemn thee to destruction in the name of the law."

and independence of the proceedings in our popular assembly, were wholly wanting in the French Convention—the chair was not supported and deferred to by common consent as representing the majority of the whole body, and the strangers admitted to the galleries (*tribunes*) were not there upon mere sufferance, ready to be instantly excluded if they in the least particular presumed to interfere with the proceedings.

The licence and the personalities in which the members were wont to indulge with levity and coarse humour, formed a strange and even appalling contrast to the dreadful work in which they were engaged.—Legendre was a butcher, and that he had imported the habits of his trade into his political sphere, appears plainly enough from his proposition to have the King's body cut into eighty-three portions, and distributed among the several departments. His calling was not unfrequently brought up against him in the Convention —"Tais-toi, massacreur de bœufs!"* said one whom he was denouncing. "C'est que j'en ai assommé qui avoient plus d'esprit que toi!† was the butcher's immediate reply.—Another being on his defence against a motion for a decree of accusation to put him on his trial, Legendre then presiding said, "Décrète qu'il soit mis"—"Décrète," said the other, interrupting him, "décrète que je suis bœuf, et tu m'assommeras toi-même."‡—Such passages remind one of the grotesque humours of the fiends in 'Paradise Lost,' whose scoffing raillery in their "gamesome mood" Milton has so admirably painted, to the extreme displeasure, no doubt, of his prudish critic, in whose estimation this is by "far the most exceptionable passage of the whole poem."§

* "Hold your peace, slaughterer of oxen!"

† "Why, I have slaughtered some that had more sense than thou."

‡ "Decree that he be put."—"Decree that I am an ox, and thou mayest butcher me thyself."

§ Addison, 'Spectator,' No. 279. The dialogue of mutual sarcasm between Adamo and Sinon in Dante's 'Inferno,' would have given the

The talent which Camille displayed as a writer has been alluded to; it might not appear to be of the highest order were we considering the merit of one who was a mere author. But he also played a great part among the actors in the scenes of the time; and of those he stands certainly highest as a master of composition. There is nothing vile or low in his taste, like that most base style of extravagant figure and indecent and even obscene allusion, which disgusts us in the abominable writings of the Héberts and the Marats; nor are our feelings shocked by anything of the same ferocity which reigned through their constant appeals to the brutal passions of the savage mob. On the contrary, the allusions are chiefly classical, the sentiments generally humane, the diction refined. Seven papers only of his most celebrated work, 'Le Vieux Cordelier,' appeared before his moderate counsels hurried him to the scaffold. But from one of these a passage may be selected for a fair sample of his powers as a writer. It is his appeal to the Convention, awakening their courage, and urging them to contemn the danger of stemming the ultra-revolutionary torrent; and it must be allowed that the topic of illustration is happily chosen, as it is certainly handled with ability:—

"Eh quoi! lorsque tous les jours les douze cent mille soldats du peuple Français affrontent les redoutes hérissées de batteries les plus meurtrières, et volent de victoires en victoires, nous, députés à la Convention, nous, qui ne pouvons jamais tomber, comme le soldat, dans l'obscurité de la nuit, fusillé dans les ténèbres, et sans témoins de sa valeur; nous, dont la mort soufferte pour la liberté ne peut être que glorieuse, solennelle, et en présence de la nation entière, de l'Europe, et de la postérité, serions-nous plus lâches que nos soldats?

same offence to the critic; and the poet seems as if conscious of the offence he was offering to squeamish persons, when he makes Virgil chide his pupil for listening to such ribaldry.

Craindrons-nous de nous exposer, de regarder Bouchotte* en face? N'oserons-nous braver la grande colère du Père Duchesne,† pour remporter aussi la victoire que le peuple Français attend de nous, la victoire sur les ultra-révolutionnaires comme sur les contre-révolutionnaires; la victoire sur tous les intrigans, tous les fripons, tous les ambitieux tous les ennemis du bien public?" ‡

St. Just was in every point of view a person very inferior to either Danton or Camille. Except his unhesitating audacity, derived from a strong enthusiasm, which nothing could quell, and which stopped at nothing, and a considerable facility of speech, but with no power of argument or gift of eloquence, he really appears to have possessed no quality to entitle him to the high place after which he aspired, and which he almost immediately gained at a very early age, for he was only twenty-one years old when the Revolution broke out, and barely twenty-five when he became a member of the Committee of Public Safety. He was a young man of a fine aspect, and even engaging countenance; and his sincere republican fanaticism was unquestionable. But this affords so little palliation of his conduct, that it rather makes him appear as so much the more dangerous, and it undoubtedly made him the more mischievous. His youth

* A Terrorist general of the Hébert faction.

† The name of Hébert's infamous journal.

‡ "What! While the twelve hundred thousand soldiers of the French people each day face the redoubts bristling with the most destructive batteries, and fly from victory to victory, shall we—we, the representatives of that people in the Convention, we, who cannot fall, like soldiers, in the obscurity of night, killed in the dark, and with no witness of our valour—we, whose death for liberty cannot but be glorious, solemn, in the presence of the whole nation, of Europe, and of posterity—shall *we* be more timid than our troops? Shall we be afraid of exposing ourselves, of facing Bouchotte? Shall we not dare to brave the fury of Père Duchesne, in order to win the victory which the people of France is expecting at our hands; a victory over ultra-revolutionists as well as counter-revolutionists, a victory over all the intriguers, all the knaves, all the ambitious, all the enemies of the country?"

and spirit, always when combined a favourite with the multitude, gave him a sway which made Robespierre at once perceive the importance of attaching him to himself. He succeeded; for St. Just kept steadily by his patron to the end, and shared the fate which his violent counsels, far outstripping those of his leader, would, had they been followed, possibly have postponed, if not prevented.

It must be added that with his fanaticism was mixed up the most selfish vanity and irritable impatience of whatever wounded it. The cold-blooded murder of Camille for a jest uttered at his expense, is one of the most disgusting atrocities in the whole Reign of Terror, and could only have been perpetrated by a man whose whole feelings were absorbed in self-esteem, and to whom carnage was familiar or indifferent, if not absolutely grateful. He had shown the same proneness to shed blood when employed as the Committee's emissary and representative with the armies. He is said to have caused fifty officers to be shot in one day, when he was with the Army of the North; and when the siege of Charleroi went on less rapidly than his impatience and ignorant presumption desired, he put a colonel of artillery to death without remorse.

He valued himself, among other accomplishments, on his talent for composition; but his writings, like his speeches, were a wretched patchwork of phrases from Rousseau, Diderot, and other writers of the modern school, strung together with sounding generalities about equality, the people, and the rights of man. To give samples of the rant, half-cold declamation, half-mawkish sentimentality, which composed his speeches would be unprofitable. Like all such authors, he mistook exclamation and apostrophe for pathos. This passage on the King's trial is far from being an unfair specimen of his manner; and nothing can be much worse. After alluding to Louis XVI.'s known

kindness of disposition and his charities, he breaks out into this rhapsody:—

"Louis outrageait la vertu; à qui paraîtra-t-elle désormais innocente? Ainsi donc, âmes sensibles, si vous aimez le peuple, si vous vous attendrissez sur son sort, on vous évitera avec horreur; la fausseté d'un roi qui travestissait le sentiment ne permettrait plus de vous croire; on rougira de paraître sensible." *

Hardly any of the revolutionary chiefs showed less shining talents than St. Just; none proved themselves more unscrupulous in the pursuit of victory; none more careless of the crimes they instigated or perpetrated. His maxim that "no one can rule in France innocently," † if followed up to its practical consequences, was the direct sanction of every enormity that ambition could commit in chace of dominion.

It should seem as if, in casting their several parts, the Decemvirs of the Committee well understood each other's propensities, if not their several capacities. While the war-department was committed to Carnôt, who by common consent was the most singularly fitted to conduct it, others might be less qualified for their departments than Carnôt was for his, but all were apparently chosen with a view at least to their several tastes, if not to their genius. The care of the police and of whatever measures were required for maintaining or exciting the popular feelings, was given to Robespierre; the proposal of violent proceedings to the mild-spoken and, from his infirmities, inoffensive Couthon; while the reports to the Convention fell upon Barrère, whose want of determined or distinct principles and character, as well as his easy eloquence,

* "Louis outraged virtue: to whom will she hereafter appear innocent? Thus, ye feeling hearts, if you love the people, if you are melted at seeing their lot, you will be shunned with horror; the falsehood of a king who masked himself in sentiment will not suffer you to gain credit for your professions. Men will henceforth blush to appear tender-hearted."

† "On ne règne pas innocemment en France."

seemed peculiarly to fit him for this task; and to the suspicious, implacable St. Just belonged the watching and denunciation of political offenders, including of course the extensive system of spy-craft (*espionnage*) kept in perpetual activity. It should seem, however, as if Robespierre himself employed spies apart from his colleagues. Curious reports of these agents were found among his papers, and have been made public. The circumstances seized upon by the watchful eyes of those vile wretches are all of the most trivial nature, and demonstrate the readiness with which everything and anything becomes matter of charge under such a regimen. Of one deputy (Bourdon de l'Oise) it is said, after tracing his whole motions during the day, that on going to the Convention he yawned repeatedly while reports were read of matters advantageous to the state.* Of another (Thuriot) it is told, that some one upon quitting him said, "Ne tarde pas."† Of Legendre it is said, after a minute account of all the insignificant things he did during the morning, that he "conversed mysteriously with some one, and that both appeared to avoid the crowd."‡

It is not to be forgotten, in considering the relative demerits of the Triumvirate, that by far the most sanguinary period of the Reign of Terror was the last month of its existence, as we have already seen; and during the whole of that period Robespierre absented himself from the Committee as well as the Convention. It is true that he was engaged in supporting, possibly the system, certainly his own party in it, at the Jacobin Club, and with the municipality of Paris; and he most probably was aware of all that passed among his colleagues in his absence. But the details at least of these wholesale murders, the *fournées* (or batches), as they were quaintly termed, were left to the unflinching hands of the pitiless Couthon and the ferocious St. Just.

* Papiers Inédits, vol. i. p. 370.
† Make haste. Ib. p. 371.
‡ Ib. p. 367.

Nor is it to be kept out of view that this detestable youth urged upon the tyrant a measure from which even his savage nature recoiled (if indeed it be not that his nerves gave way at the prospect), a measure of sweeping extermination, which would have left all former atrocities excluded from their due share of execration with aftertimes, and must have stayed, possibly might have averted, the fate of the Dictators.

The reflection which after all most constantly arises in the mind from the contemplation of such dreadful scenes, is the one to which reference has in part already been made towards the commencement of these details —an astonishment almost amounting to incredulity that the French nation could have stood by, and seen and suffered them to be enacted. Everything was done which human wickedness could accomplish to outrage the strongest feelings of our nature, and those feelings of every description; for while the most atrocious, the most shameless injustice, proverbially said to drive wise men mad, was displayed with an audacity that would hardly be becoming in those whose judgment was infallible and nature impeccable, and while the highest dignities, the most exalted institutions were laid prostrate at the feet of the vulgar tyrants of a day, such deeds of blood were perpetrated as always take the strongest hold upon the feelings of the bulk of mankind; and all this was not merely submitted to in patience; a considerable portion of the people in many places were active approvers, and in many were agents, and stained with these dreadful crimes. If any one had, before 1789, aye, or even before 1792, foretold that the French people would submit to a law preventing men upon trial for their lives from being heard in their own defence, and commanding that the judges should condemn to death for political offences without

evidence, he would have been laughed to scorn as a false prophet, and reprobated as a public slanderer. But if any one had pretended to foresee the time when the statue of a miscreant universally scorned and detested for daily recommending the wholesale murder of his fellow-creatures, without a vestige of those talents which too often conceal the nakedness of guilt, or those graces which lend a passing hue of fairness to the external surface of moral poison, would, with general applause, even of those who had loathed him living, be enshrined in the national temple of glory, among men whose genius and virtue had long been the pride of the French people—assuredly such a seer would have been deemed insane. Can anything more strikingly or more frightfully impress upon the mind a sense of the mischiefs which may spring from popular enthusiasm, when bad men obtain a sway over a nation little informed, and unable or unwilling to think and judge for itself; ready to believe whatever it is told by interested informants, to follow whatever is recommended by false advisers acting for their own selfish ends? That no such scenes could now be renewed in France we may very safely venture to affirm, though much mischief might still be wrought by undue popular excitement. That in this country such things are wholly impossible needs no proof; the very least of the terrible departures from justice which marked the course of the French mob-tyranny, would at once overthrow whatever person might here attempt to reign by such means, and would probably drive us into some extremes diametrically opposite to those which had given birth to any outrage of the kind. But this security arises wholly from the people's habit of thinking for themselves, and the impossibility of any one making them act upon grounds which they do not comprehend, or for purposes in which they have no manifest interest, or to suit views carefully concealed from them, and only covered over with vague phrases,

which in this country are always the source of incurable distrust.

It is impossible to say the same thing of all portions of our people; it would be most false to assert, for example, that the Irish are safe from such influence. On the contrary, they manifestly do not think and judge for themselves; they certainly are in the hands of persons who need not take the trouble to give sound reasons, or any reasons at all, for their advice. The Irish people are excited and moved to action in the mass, by appeals to matters of which they do not take the pains to comprehend even the outline, much less to reflect on the import and tendency. They are made, and easily made, to exert themselves for things of which they have formed no distinct idea, and in which they have no real interest whatever. They leave to others, their spiritual and their political guides, the task of forming their opinions for them, if mere cry and clamour, mere running about and shouting, can be called opinions. They never are suspicious of a person's motives, merely because they see he has an interest in deceiving them. They never weigh the probabilities of the tale, nor the credit of him that tells it. They may be deceived by the same person nine times in succession, and they will believe him just as implicitly the tenth; nay, were he to confess that he had wilfully deceived them to suit a purpose of his own, they would only consider this a proof of his honesty, and lend an ear if possible more readily to his next imposture. A people thus uninstructed, thus excited, thus guided, are most deeply to be pitied; and the duty is most imperative of their rulers, by all means, and without delay, to rescue them from such ignorance, and save them from such guides by every kindly mode of treatment which a paternal Government can devise. But such a people, especially if the natural goodness of their dispositions were not outraged by scenes of a cruel kind, would

easily be moved to witness and to suffer the grossest violations of justice, would let themselves be hallooed on to the attack of their best friends by any wily impostor that might have gained their confidence, and would suffer men as base and as execrable as Marat to usurp the honours of their Pantheon.

But it must be admitted that there existed two powerful causes of the success which attended the vile agitators of France,—causes sufficient to account for much of the impression which they were allowed to make, and of the impunity which they enjoyed after their worst misdeeds.

In the *first* place there was a very large portion of genuine and even virtuous patriotism among many of the men who bore a part in public affairs, who remained attached to their principles during the struggle of parties, and who were but little corrupted by the personal views which had early seduced so many of their chiefs. They had a strong feeling in favour of liberty, and of consequent attachment to the Revolution in the first and guiltless stage of its existence; they had also an ardent love of their country, of her glory, above all, of her independence. The court-party early betrayed views, natural in their position, hostile to the new order of things; and as the revolutionary measures more departed from moderation, and the existence of the monarchy became more exposed to peril, that party cast their eyes unhappily towards foreign assistance, the idea of which at once aroused the feelings of Frenchmen, and marshalled on the side of even an extreme policy, a large portion of the community not originally prepared to part with all the existing institutions of that ancient kingdom. Nothing but the invasion of the allies in 1792 could have reconciled such men to the violence which was then done, not only to the court and royal family, but also to multitudes of harmless individuals in obscure station. The brilliant progress of the war

during the Reign of Terror blinded many persons to the atrocities daily committed; and their perpetrators had the skill to make it supposed that a sudden reverse of the singular fortune which attended their arms, if not an invasion of France by the allies, was the alternative to be expected from the overthrow of their dominion and the restoration of moderate and regular government. In the midst of all the factious conflicts which tore the infant Republic, the general prevalence of purely patriotic feelings and of motives solely influenced by honest views of the public good, how often soever mistaken, remains quite unquestionable. The great bulk of the Convention, and many even of the leaders, were men devoted to their country, and bent only on the discharge of their public duty. "*La patrie*," the magic word which never lost its influence, was in all men's mouths, but also in most men's hearts. Many chiefs who became corrupted by ambition in the course of their exertions for her interests, or perverted by hostility towards each other in the progress of their mutual conflicts, began their career with as unfeigned a love of their country, and as honest an attachment to revolutionary principles, and the cause of just reform, as ever filled the hearts or guided the course of any statesmen in any age. Some of the great leaders, as Robert Lindet, Vergniaud, perhaps Danton and Camille, retained the same principles throughout their short and stormy lives. Some, as Carnôt, Lakanal, Barthélemy, probably Rœderer, after holding fast by their integrity during the awful struggle that was so fitted to try men's souls, survived the tempest, and adorned by their talents and edified by their virtues the more tranquil season that succeeded. The criminal portion of the revolutionists were few in number compared to those whom they duped by their arts, or whom they succeeded in overawing by the violence of the multitude. But it was not wholly against their will, or through the mere influence of

terror, that the bulk of the Convention and of the country submitted to the outrages of the Decemvirs. An alarm of an opposite nature worked strongly on their minds; the dread of a Counter-revolution, and of the vengeance which its leaders, if successful, would surely exercise, had a very powerful operation in reconciling men's minds to the existing Government; and it is certain that the execution of the King and the other crimes early committed by some and connived at by all, had the greatest influence in causing a general fear of retribution and a proportional alarm at what must happen, should the old dynasty be restored.

These considerations must be taken into our account in examining the conduct of the French, and accounting for their submission to the tyranny, injustice, and cruelty of their revolutionary chiefs; else we shall both mistake the state of the question, and do injustice to that great people. It is also due to the leading men of those times that we record how pure was the attachment of many of them to their country, and how little other motives operated on their minds. The course so frequent in such times, leading others from patriotism to faction, from zeal for a principle to impatience of opposition, and from desire of victory over an adversary to the lust of power for personal gratification, gave rise to most of the errors and many of the crimes which we have been contemplating. A melancholy consideration of these and their causes only serves to enhance the value of those men who yielded to no such seductions, and to increase our respect for their pure motives and virtuous lives. But the same contemplation suggests another reflection, teaches another lesson. It shows, with the force of demonstration, the fatal consequences to themselves and their own virtue, of men, however strong their principles and pure their enthusiasm, yielding to such a passion, and overleaping under its influence the

plain line of duty which forbids the doing of evil that good may come. It shows the fatal consequences to the community of suffering parties and their chiefs to acquire the ascendant, when pretending, perhaps at first really meaning, to rule the state for the furtherance of a wholesome, rational policy—it being hard to say whether more wickedness may be committed by public men under the influence of enthusiasm, or more detriment sustained by the country under the misguidance of faction.

In the *second* place it must be observed that in all times of revolutionary violence there is an impunity secured to the worst characters by the spirit of party, and especially by the slowness of party chiefs to sacrifice even their worst adherents, and give them over to the merited indignation of the world. See the universal horror and disgust which Marat inspired in all men and of all parties—his odious violence, his virulence of temper more hateful still, his savage ferocity of manner exacerbated by the fury of his sentiments, and the wildness of his propositions; his avowed authorship of a journal which openly preached the indiscriminate massacre of whole classes for their political principles; his constant efforts to excite the mob and drive them towards the most infernal excesses*—all these execrable and utterly abominable

* In recommending the massacre of all aristocrats, he scrupled not to proclaim through his paper, the '*Ami du Peuple*,' that 270,000 heads must fall by the guillotine; and he published lists of persons whom he consigned to popular vengeance and destruction by their names, description, and places of residence. He was remarkable for the hideous features of a countenance at once horrible and ridiculous, and for the figure of a dwarf, not above five feet high. He was on his first appearance in the mob-meetings of his district the constant butt of the company, and maltreated by all, even to gross personal rudeness. The mob, however, always took his part, because of the violence of his horrid language. Thus, long before he preached wholesale massacre in his journal, he had denounced 800 deputies as fit for execution, and demanded that they should be hanged on as many trees. His constant topic was assassination, not only in his journal, but in private society. Barbaroux describes him in his '*Mémoires*' (p. 59) as recommending that all aristocrats should be

things, had so entirely obliterated the merits which his revolutionary violence and devotion to the extreme party might seem to display, that no one would associate with him or remain on the bench of the assembly on which he took his seat; and when he rose to vindicate himself from the charges on which he was put upon his trial, and began by saying that he was aware he had many enemies in the Convention, his voice was drowned by cries from every quarter of "*All! All!*"—Yet the Jacobin party allowed this wretch to be elected one of the deputies from the capital;* and neither Robespierre nor any of his adherents, nor even Danton, ventured to denounce him, and to give their real and known sentiments respecting him. Nay, when the accident of his assassination had freed the earth from so monstrous a pollution, and his bust was simply for that reason

obliged to wear a badge, in order that they might be recognized and killed. "But," he used to add, "you have only to wait at the playhouse door and mark those who come out, and to observe who have servants, carriages, and silk clothes; and if you kill them all, you are pretty sure you have killed so many aristocrats. Or if ten in a hundred should be patriots, it don't signify—you have killed ninety aristocrats." He was about fifty at the time of his death, being born in 1744, and consequently of an age prior to that of the other leaders except Bailly, who was born in 1736. He is said to have taught French in Edinburgh about the year 1774; and he there published a pamphlet in English under the title of '*The Chains of Slavery.*' He was born at Neufchâtel, and was an obscure medical practitioner in Paris. He published some works of some learning and no other merit on subjects of physical science.—One of his books, published at Amsterdam, is the subject of a criticism by Voltaire. The man's constant complaint was, that he was prevented by the cabals of academics from obtaining the fame he deserved. He founded a prize to be awarded by the Academy of Dijon, and anonymously contended for it by a memoir, and without any success whatever.

* There were among the twenty-four deputies of Paris in the Convention ten of the greatest leaders, exclusive of Marat,—Robespierre and his brother, Danton, Collot d'Herbois, Camille Desmoulins, Legendre, Fabre d'Eglantine, Billaud Varennes, David, and Egalité (*ci-devant* Duc d'Orléans). Robespierre's brother was a person of no weight, and only known from his relationship to him. He was, however, a zealous republican, was employed with the army of Italy when it took Nice; and he sacrificed himself generously on the downfall of his brother, with whom he was arrested at his own desire, and executed with the Triumvirate.

placed in the Pantheon, most of the great leaders paid tributes of respect from time to time to his memory, holding up his supposed services as objects of public gratitude, and his death as a martyrdom for revolutionary principles. Yet that death had not obliterated the recollection of any one of the enormities of his life, which had made him so justly the object of universal scorn. Robespierre pronounced his funeral oration; David boasted of preserving by his pencil "the cherished features of the virtuous friend of the people;" and Danton most unaccountably and preposterously called him the Divine Marat, boasting after his assassination of having long before given him that very absurd appellation.

Can any one doubt that such conduct in parties and their chiefs, such a pusillanimous truckling to the passions of the rabble, such a base pandering to their worst propensities, as this silence respecting great criminals implies, must ever be as impolitic as it is profligate and unprincipled? We have examples of its consequences in all ages, and it has proved most injurious to many a great man's renown. It was probably only as a party leader that Julius Cæsar, without partaking in Catiline's conspiracy, spoke far too gently of it, and gave its accomplices his protection, if not his countenance, on the proceeding against them before the senate. But the result of this party delicacy has been the impression which still rests on the memory of that great man, and leads to a prevailing suspicion of his having secretly joined the most abandoned of conspirators. So, in modern times, whoever is afraid of reprobating and attacking known guilt merely for fear of losing the support of some partizan, or offending some party, must make up his mind to passing for the accomplice in crimes which, whether from timidity or upon calculation, he dares not denounce. Against the loss of support let men wisely set the loss of character, which such an unprincipled

course is sure to entail upon those who pursue it; and it is not doubtful on which side the balance of the account will be found to rest.

One other reflection of a practical nature is important enough to be here added, as the natural result of the survey which we have been taking of the Reign of Terror—I mean the extreme danger of allowing political bodies, under any pretext whatever, to interfere with the administration of justice. The Convention's controversy with the Revolutionary Tribunal was in truth the cause of all the horrors which we have been contemplating. The thin disguise under which this interference was veiled could deceive no one, least of all those who made use of it to hide their tyranny. "The public good"—"the danger of the country"—"the safety of the people"—above all, "the privileges of the Legislative Body" and "the sacred rights of the people's representatives"—were constantly in men's mouths as a justification for the Convention assuming the judicial power, and subjugating the courts of justice. When we see our own Houses of Parliament setting up their claim to punish summarily all who dispute, even in courts of law and according to the course which the law prescribes, those powers declared in no written statute, and only asserted or defined from time to time as their exercise is found convenient, and always after the act is done which they are put forth to condemn and to visit—surely we may well feel some alarm at such a stride towards the very worst of the outrages on all justice and all humanity that form the chief disgrace of the French Revolution. To take an example:—The House of Commons prints and sells libels upon individuals; and if the injured party dare, without leave, to sue the printers or the authors whose slanders the Commons have thought

fit to publish, he is sent to prison for breach of privilege. But if the injured party petitions humbly for leave to proceed in vindicating his wounded honour, he meets with a flat refusal. It is the pleasure of the Commons to deal in slander, and to this he must submit. Nay, it was quite clear that a late government, being unable to give their mob supporters strong measures of innovation, attacked the Judges instead—knowing this to be, in the mob's eyes, an acceptable equivalent. The noble conduct of Lord Denman through the whole of this controversy is above all praise. Indeed there is but one reason for stinting our applause, that it might seem as if such conduct were not in all Judges a matter of course.

SIÉYES.

THERE are few names in the French Revolution which have figured so much as that of the Abbé Siéyes; and hardly any which is better known in connection with this great chapter of modern story. Those who have only marked the space which he filled in debate, or the merits of his celebrated tracts at the convocation of the States General, or the failure of all his plans of constitutions, are apt to underrate the importance of his labours, and to suppose that his high place in the revolutionary Pantheon had been inconsiderately awarded by the public voice. A personal acquaintance with him would certainly have led to the same conclusion. But near observers, belonging to the times in which he figured, entirely dissent from this opinion, and give reasons, apparently satisfactory, for taking the more ordinary view of his services and his importance. I have frequently discussed the subject both with General Carnôt and Prince Talleyrand, neither of them at all likely to be deceived by a mere theorist, both of them entertaining very little respect for a metaphysical politician, and from all their own tastes and habits sure to regard with somewhat of disdain a purely speculative statesman. Yet both agreed in affirming the great merit of the Abbé, and they appealed to the extreme importance of the measures which proceeded from him, and for the suggestion of which they both gave him the exclusive credit.

Those great measures were three in number, of which certainly it would not be easy to overrate the importance,—namely, the joint verification of the powers at the meeting of the States General, the for-

mation of the National Guards, the establishment of the new system of provincial division and administration. The first of these measures led directly to the important step of the three orders, Prelates, Peers, and Commons, sitting in one chamber, and the consequent absorption of the whole in the latter body. The value of the second needs not be dwelt upon. But the third was by far the most material of the whole, because it not only settled the Revolution upon an immovable foundation — the admission of the people everywhere to a share in the local administration of their concerns—but destroyed the remains of the monarchical divisions of the territory, and rendered inevitable that grand step, the most precious of all the fruits of the Revolution, the abolition of the various local and customary codes, and the extension over the whole country of one universal system of jurisprudence; in the stead of a state of things so intolerable, and so absurd, as the existence of totally different laws in different streets of the same town or hamlet.

If it is granted that the whole praise of these reforms belongs undivided to Siéyes, it is proved that his was a mind most fertile of resources, and that its conceptions were not more vast than they were practical. M. Thiers describes his genius as characterized by this peculiarity—"a systematic concatenation of his own ideas"—a peculiarity which he shared with our Bentham; and the likeness is only made the more striking when the author adds, that "to this was united an inflexible obstinacy of disposition, which made him as tenacious of his own opinions as he was intolerant of all others."* M. Mignet describes him as still more of a speculatist; but his sketch loses not all the resemblance to what we have seen of Bentham. "Siéyes," says he, "would have founded a sect in the days of monkish solitude; and study

* Hist. de la Révol. Française, tom. i.

had early ripened his faculties, and filled his mind with new, strong, and extensive ideas, but somewhat systematic. Society had been the main subject of his investigations. He had followed its progress, and decomposed its springs, and he conceived the nature of government to be rather a question of age and period than of rights; he disdained the ideas of others, because he found them incomplete: and, in his eyes, half a truth was equivalent to error. Opposition irritated him; he was not communicative; he desired to be understood entirely, and this he found impossible with half the world. His disciples transmitted his systems to others, and this gave them a mysterious air, and made him the object of a kind of worship. He possessed the authority which attends a perfect political science, and the constitution might have sprung from his head, like Minerva from Jupiter's or the codes of ancient lawgivers, if it had not been that in our days every one claimed a right of aiding him, or of modifying his work. Nevertheless, his forms were, with some modifications, for the most part adopted; and in the Committees, where his labours lay, he had more disciples than fellow-workmen."*

As of other remarkable persons, so of Siéyes are there many things recounted which appear to rest on no foundation. Of this description is the story so often told, that on the question coming to him upon the punishment which should be inflicted on the unfortunate Louis XVI., he, impatient of the speeches which had preceded him, pronounced these words, "*La mort, sans phrase.*" No such thing is recorded in the account published by authority in the *Moniteur*. Under the head of Deputies from the Department of La Sarthe, we have this entry:—

"Froyer—La Mort.

"Siéyes—La Mort.

* Hist. de la Révol. Française, tom. i. p. 113.

"Le Tourneur*—La Mort."

It is a form of voting adopted by many of the members, and nothing whatever distinguishes these from the other votes.

To the earlier period of the Revolution, the importance and the fame of Siéyes must be confined. Nothing can well exceed the absurdity of some plans which he, at a later stage, propounded. He had a great share in the proceedings of Brumaire, which overthrew the Directory and founded the Consulship under Napoleon. But he desired not to establish a Consulate, of which he should himself hold his share, a divided and nominal third of the supreme power, while in reality all authority was to be vested in one of his colleagues. He proposed a form of government, which, for its absurdity, may fairly challenge the pre-eminence with any not the produce of Dean Swift's satirical humour. Napoleon should, according to this strange scheme, have been invested with the supreme magistracy, but without any power, executive or legislative; enriched with an enormous salary, and suffered to exercise the whole patronage, civil and military, of the State, while others were named by the people to make the laws, and conduct, in union with his executive nominees, the government of the country. Napoleon's remark was, that he had no wish to "be a fattened hog, on a salary of some millions *(cochon à l'engrais à une salaire de quelques millions)*, after the life which he had led and in the position to which it had carried him." I must add that I have met with several French politicians, neither ignorant nor speculative, who had, much to my surprise, formed a favourable opinion of this plan.†

In the beginning of the year 1817, I made acquaintance with the Abbé, at that time, with Cambacérès and other regicides, residing at Brussels. I was then

* Le Tourneur de la Manche; afterwards one of the Executive Directory.

† M. Thiers in his 'Consulat' takes this view.

on my way to attend my parliamentary duties at the opening of the Session; and finding himself in company with a party leader, he was—unfortunately for me, who desired to hear him descant on matters which he understood—led to give me, at great length and with little fruit, his ideas upon a point the most incomprehensible to a foreigner, and indeed the most difficult for any uninitiated Englishman, any Englishman out of the vortex of practical politics, to understand,—namely, the course most fitting, in the circumstances of the moment, for the English Parliamentary opposition to take. I admired the unhesitating confidence with which he delivered authoritatively his opinions, oracularly dictating to me his crude, absurd, most ignorant notions. I marvelled at the boldness of the man who could thus lecture one necessarily well acquainted with the subject, of which the lecturer could not by possibility understand the A, B, C. I exceedingly lamented the loss of what might have been interviews productive of curious information. I returned to England without the least disposition to put a single one of his absurdities to the test of experience; for indeed to have mentioned even the most tolerable of them to the least experienced of our party, would have been to raise a doubt of my seriousness, if not of my sanity. Both my valued friend the late Lord Kinnaird and myself were mightily struck with the contrast which Cambacérès presented to the Abbé in these interviews.

After the Revolution of 1830 Siéyes returned to Paris, where he lived to an extreme old age; and for several years before his death paid no attention to anything except the care of his health, seldom seeing his friends, and only quitting his house to take an airing in a carriage. A general desire was expressed by his colleagues of the Institute, that he should return to his place in that illustrious body. Count Rœderer was one of a deputation which sought an interview with

him in the hopes of prevailing upon him to change his resolution and yield to the general wish. The attempt was vain: and a touching scene was described to me by the Count. After saying how useless a member he should now be of any association, and conversing, but in a strain that bore marks of the hand of age being upon him, he said, "Enfin, je ne sais plus parler, ni"—and after a pause he added, "ni—me taire."*

FOUCHÉ, (AFTERWARDS) DUKE OF OTRANTO.

[FOR THIS NOTE I AM INDEBTED TO MY NOBLE AND LEARNED FRIEND THE EARL STANHOPE.]

I FORMED his acquaintance at Dresden, where he arrived about November, 1815, as French Minister, but in a sort of honourable exile; and he told me the Duke of Wellington had advised him not to accept that mission, saying, "You will get into a hole which you will never be able to leave." He afterwards expressed to me his regret at not having followed that advice, and his opinion that the anticipation was realized by the event.

From an exaggerated opinion, both of his own importance and of the malice of his enemies, he had left Paris in disguise, and was so apprehensive of being recognized, that when he met his wife on the road he would not acknowledge her. He had remained some weeks at Brussels, and carried on a correspondence with the Duke of Wellington and others, but, after receiving from the French Government a peremptory order to repair to his post, he continued his journey under the name of M. Durand, marchand de vin, till he came to Leipzig, where he resumed his own name. He was accompanied by his wife, who was of the family of Castellane, and related, as he said, to the Bourbons, with four children by his former marriage, by an eldest son who appeared to be of weak intellect, and who became remarkable for his avarice, by two other sons who, even in their child-

* "In short, I am no longer able to speak, nor—nor to hold my tongue."

There is a curious account given by Fouché himself in Léger's Memoirs. Vol. 414.

hood, exhibited a strong disposition to cruelty, by a daughter, and by a very intriguing governess, Mddle. Ribaud.

He had been early in life a professor in the Oratoire, and it was said very truly at Dresden that he had "le visage d'un moine, et la voix d'un mort," and, as he was for some time the only foreign minister at that court, that he appeared "like the ghost of the departed corps diplomatique." His countenance showed great intelligence, and did not indicate the cunning by which he was eminently distinguished; his manner was calm and dignified, and he had, either from nature or from long habit, much power of self-possession. When I announced to him the execution of Marshal Ney, of which by some accident I had received the earliest information, his countenance never changed. He appeared to be nearly sixty years of age, and his hair had become as white as snow, in consequence of his having, according to his own expression, "slept upon the guillotine for twenty-five years." His conversation was very animated and interesting, but it related chiefly to events in which he had been an actor, and his inordinate vanity induced him to say: "I am not a king, but I am more illustrious than any of them." His statements did not deserve implicit credence, and I may mention as an instance his bold denial that during the whole course of his long administration as Minister of Police, any letter had ever been opened at the post-office.

Amongst a great number of anecdotes which he related to me, there were two that exhibited in a very striking manner the fertility of his resources when he acted on his own theatre, though, as I shall afterwards show, he appeared utterly helpless amidst the difficulties which he encountered at Dresden.

While he was on a mission to the newly-established Cisalpine Republic, he received orders from the French Directory to require the removal of some functionaries who were obnoxious to the Austrian Government. He refused to comply, and stated in his answer that those functionaries were attached to France; that the ill-will with which they were viewed by the Austrian Government was not a reason for the French Government to demand their dismissal; that, according to intelligence which had reached him, Austrian

troops were advancing, and that the war would be renewed. The orders were reiterated without effect, and one morning he was informed that an agent of the Directory was arrived at his house, and was accompanied by some gens d'armes. Fouché desired that the agent might be admitted, and that a message might be sent to his friend General Joubert, who commanded some French troops then stationed in the same town, requesting him to come immediately, and to bring with him a troop of cavalry. The agent delivered to Fouché letters of recall, and showed to him afterwards an order to arrest him and to conduct him to Paris. Fouché made some observations to justify himself till the arrival of Joubert with the cavalry was announced, when he altered his tone, and told the agent: "You talk of arresting me, and it is in my power to arrest you." Joubert said, on entering the room, "Me voilà avec mes dragons, mon cher ami; que puis-je faire à votre service?" and Fouché replied: "Ce drôle-là veut m'arrêter." "Comment!" exclaimed Joubert, "dans ce cas-là je le taillerai en mille pièces." The agent excused himself as being obliged to execute the orders which he had received, and was dismissed by Fouché with the remark, "Vous êtes un sot; allez tranquillement à votre hôtel." When he had retired, Fouché observed that the Directory was not respected either at home or abroad, that it would therefore be easy to overthrow the government, and that Joubert might obtain high office if he would assist in the undertaking. Joubert answered that he was merely a soldier, and that he did not wish to meddle in politics; but he granted Fouché's request of furnishing him with a military escort to provide for his safety till he reached Paris. On the road he prepared an address to the Council of Five Hundred, which was calculated to be very injurious, and perhaps fatal, to the government. When he arrived at Paris he called on each of the Directors, but was not admitted, and he expressed to me his conviction that he should have been arrested the next morning if he had not immediately insisted upon having an audience with Talleyrand, then Minister for Foreign Affairs. Fouché, after defending his conduct, said that he considered it his duty, before he presented his address, to show it to Talleyrand, who no sooner read it than he saw its dangerous tendency, and the

whole extent of the mischief to which it might lead. He told Fouché: "I perceive that there has been a misunderstanding, but everything may be arranged;" and added, "the post of Minister to the Batavian Republic is now vacant, and perhaps you would be willing to accept it." Fouché, who perceived that the other was intimidated, determined to avail himself of the advantage which he had acquired, and replied that his honour and character had been attacked, that immediate reparation was necessary, and that his credentials must be prepared in the course of the night, in order that he might the next day depart on his mission. This request having been granted, Fouché proceeded to state that his journey to Paris had been very expensive; that he had, through his abrupt departure from the Cisalpine Republic, lost several valuable presents which he would have received; and that his new mission required another outlay, for all of which he demanded an order for the immediate payment of two hundred thousand francs by the national treasury. Talleyrand gave the order without hesitation; and Fouché, who had arrived in disgrace, if not in great danger, departed the next morning as a minister plenipotentiary with a considerable sum of money.

After Napoleon, on his return from Elba, had made such progress as alarmed the French Government, Monsieur, afterwards Charles X., sent a message to Fouché requesting a meeting with him in the Tuileries. Fouché declined it, saying that as the circumstance would be known, it would place his conduct in a very ambiguous light, and he then received another message proposing to meet him at the house of a third party. To this proposal Fouché assented, on the condition that the interview should take place in the presence of witnesses, two of whom should attend on each side. On such an occasion any questions of etiquette must have appeared of very subordinate importance; the condition was accepted, and in the interview, which lasted several hours, and till long after midnight, Fouché was offered the appointment of Police, the title of Prince, and the decoration of the St. Esprit. Fouché replied that the advance of Napoleon was the natural and necessary consequence of the general discontent which prevailed; that no human power could prevent his arrival at Paris; that Fouché's

acceptance of office under such circumstances might create an impression of his having betrayed a sovereign whom he ought faithfully to serve; and that he was therefore obliged to reject the offers which in the course of the conversation were repeatedly pressed on his acceptance. It seemed to be supposed by the French Government that the refusal of such offers was an indication of attachment to Napoleon, and the next morning, when Fouché was in his carriage, at a short distance from his own house, he was stopped "in the name of the King," by an officer of police, attended by gens d'armes. Fouché desired them to accompany him to his house, when, on getting out of the carriage, he demanded the production of the warrant by which he was arrested; and on its being shown to him, he threw it on the ground, exclaiming, "It is a forgery; this is not the King's signature." The officer of police, astounded by the effrontery with which Fouché spoke, allowed him to enter the house, when he made his escape through the garden, and went to the Princesse de Vaudremont, who concealed him till the return of Napoleon. Mdlle. Ribaud, the governess, sent a message to the National Guards requesting their immediate attendance, and conducted through the house the officer of police, as he told her that he had orders to take possession of Fouché's papers. His bureaus, &c., were searched, but nothing of any importance was found in them, and Mdlle. Ribaud when passing through her own room drew a trunk from beneath her bed, and, taking a key out of her pocket, offered to show her clothes to the officer of police, who said that he had no wish to give her that trouble. It was, however, in that trunk that Fouché's important papers were deposited. In the meantime the National Guards had arrived, and after they were harangued by Mdlle. Ribaud on the merits and services of Fouché, and on the insult and injustice with which he had been treated, they drove away the gens d'armes who attended the officer of police.

Fouché, who after the return of Napoleon was re-appointed Minister of Police, was asked by him whether it was not very desirable to obtain the services of Talleyrand, who was then one of the French ambassadors at Vienna. "Certainly," replied Fouché; and Napoleon then said, "What do you think of sending to him a handsome snuff-box?"

Fouché, aware of the extreme absurdity of endeavouring to bribe a minister, who was supposed to be rapacious, by a present which, as a matter of course, he had received on the conclusion of every treaty, observed, if a snuff-box were sent to Talleyrand, he should open it to see what it contained. "What do you mean?" inquired Napoleon. "It is idle," replied Fouché, "to talk of sending to him a snuff-box. Let an order for two millions of francs be sent to him, and let one-half of the sum be payable on his return to France." "No," said Napoleon, "that is too expensive, and I shall not think of it."

When Napoleon determined to hold the Assembly of the *Champ de Mai*, he convened his Council of State, and read to them the speech which he intended to deliver on that occasion. Some of the members expressed their entire and unqualified approbation, and others suggested a few verbal alterations: but Fouché, when it came to his turn, said that he disapproved of it both in its form and in its substance, and he then strung together some of the commonplace phrases with which his ordinary conversation so much abounded, that "truth must be heard," that "illusions could no longer prevail," &c. One of the Councillors having remarked that a written document would be very desirable for the discussion, Fouché produced the speech which he had prepared. It stated that the Allied Powers had declared war not against France, but against Napoleon; that if they were sincere in their professions, they would guarantee to France her independence, and the free choice of her own government, and that he would in that case abdicate the throne; but that if such a guarantee were refused, it would be a proof that they were insincere, and that he would then ask permission to place himself at the head of the French armies in order to defend the honour of the country. Napoleon made no observation; but, calling the Councillors to him in succession, and whispering a few words to each of them, they rejected the proposal. He must have perceived that the Allies, who viewed with anxiety and mistrust the mighty conflict in which they were about to engage, would have granted the guarantee which was required; that he should have been obliged to abdicate; and that a Republic would have been established in which Fouché hoped and

expected to acquire more power than he had yet possessed. Napoleon had on a former occasion removed Fouché from office, and reproached him with his insatiable ambition, saying, "You might always have been minister, but you aspired to be more, and I will not suffer you to become a Cardinal Richelieu."

The Memoirs which after Fouché's death were published under his name do not appear to be authentic, and the statements contained in them differ in many respects from those which I received from him, but neither the one nor the other may have been founded in truth. He read to me occasionally some detached passages, which he composed without any reference to chronological order, but as the circumstances occurred to his mind, and according to his original plan, which he communicated to me in a letter. He intended to divide his narrative into the following parts:—

"La 1e explique la révolution qui a fait passer la France de l'antique monarchie à la république; la 2e celle qui a fait passer la France de la république à l'Empire de Bonaparte; la 3e celle qui a fait passer la France de cet Empire à la Royauté des Bourbons; la 4e partie dira la situation de la France et de l'Europe."

In another letter he states:—

"Je travaille huit heures par jour à mon mémoire. Ceux qui croyent que ce sont les hommes qui font les révolutions seront étonnés de voir leur origine. J'ai déjà peint le premier tableau des événemens d'où sont sorties nos tempêtes passées. Le pendant de ce tableau sera un assez gros image d'où partira la foudre qui menace notre avenir."

His participation in the atrocities of the Revolution inspired horror at Dresden, where he formed very few acquaintances, and received hardly any visits except from Count Salmur, a Piedmontois, who had known him at Paris, and from General Gaudi, who had been sent by the Prussian Government to negotiate with respect to the line of demarcation of the Saxon provinces which were ceded, and who had received instructions from Prince Hardenberg to see Fouché frequently, and to watch his proceedings. Fouché said to me very often, "J'ar une folle envie d'écrire, et il faut que j'aille à la campagne;" and I knew that he was not disturbed by many visitors, but I observed to him that

he might give directions not to admit them. He replied, "Ne voyez-vous pas que j'ai une jeune femme, et quand je me pousse en force, je la perds d'une autre manière?" I told him that he might very easily hire one of the country-houses which at that time of year were unoccupied; but he said that he should expect the owner to remain there during his residence, and to treat him with the respect and attention which were due to him. He seemed to think that even a stranger would be too happy to accept the proposal, and to have an opportunity of associating with a person who, according to his own opinions, was "more illustrious" than any king.

The confidential communications which he received from Paris were addressed to him under another name, and directed to the care of a pastrycook in that part of the town which lies on the other bank of the Elbe. He preserved his former habits of "espionnage," and remarked to me that a person who lived on the opposite side of the street sat close to the window, was much occupied in writing, was very regular in his habits, &c. He seemed to be amused in watching this unknown individual, who was afterwards discovered to be a spy sent by the French Government to observe Fouché.

His ignorance of geography, &c., was really ludicrous. When he heard that Napoleon was sent to St. Helena, he inquired on which side of the Cape it lay; and when he was told by an Englishman that he was going to Hamburgh to embark for England, he asked, "Are you not afraid at this time of year of making a voyage in the Baltic?" The other replied that he did not embark on the Baltic. "No," said Fouché, after some consideration, "you will go by the sea of Denmark."

He was extremely delighted when he was informed that Lavalette had effected his escape by the good offices of Sir Robert Wilson and two other Englishmen, and after making a pompous eulogium on them, he said that although they had been punished by the French Government, they would everywhere be respected and honoured; that their conduct must excite general admiration, &c.; and after a long course of high-flown compliments, he concluded by an anticlimax, "if they should come here, I will even invite them to dinner."

According to a homely expression, "there was no love lost" between Fouché and Talleyrand. The former said, "Talleyrand est nul" till after he has drunk a bottle of Madeira: and the latter asked, "Do you not think that Fouché has very much the air of a country comedian?" Fouché spoke very contemptuously of the late Emperor of Austria, whom he called "un crétin."

I thought it indiscreet to ask any questions of Fouché on the cruelties of which he was represented to have been guilty at Lyons and at Nantes; but I took an opportunity of mentioning to him that a biographical memoir of him had appeared in the German language. It excited, as I expected that it would, his curiosity, and he requested me to translate it *vivâ voce*, which I accordingly did; and when the sanguinary scenes of Lyons were noticed he exclaimed, "I went there to save the inhabitants, all of whom would otherwise have been murdered by Collot d'Herbois. As for Nantes, I never was there." I remarked to him that the Memoir referred to letters which were signed both by him and by his colleague, and which had been published in the *Moniteur*; but he replied that it would at that time have been dangerous to disavow them.

He had received from the Prince of the Asturias, afterwards Ferdinand VII., during his residence at Valençay, the most servile letters, earnestly entreating that Napoleon would confer upon him the high honour of allowing him to be allied with some relation, however distant, of the Imperial Family. Fouché said that his hand was kissed by the Prince whenever he had occasion to see him; and added, "I washed it afterwards, for he was very dirty."

The intelligence which he received from Paris, through private as well as through public channels, and the hostility which was shown towards the regicides, of whom he was one, rendered him very apprehensive that his property would be confiscated, and he spoke to me frequently upon the subject. He observed that the Charter did not allow confiscation, but added, "ils ne se gênent pas;" and he proposed to make a nominal sale of his property to me, in order to place it beyond the grasp of the French Government. I objected to it on the ground that it would not be a *bonâ fide* transaction; but a day or two afterwards I

received from him a note, expressing a wish to see me immediately. On going to him, he read to me some papers prepared in technical and legal phraseology, which stated that I had purchased his estates, the annual value of which was, I think, 7000*l.*, and also his house at Paris, with the furniture that it contained. I told him that I had already expressed my disapprobation of the principle on which the transaction would proceed; and I observed to him that the fraud would be discovered, for the French Government would upon inquiry learn from the English ambassador at Paris that I was only an eldest son with a very limited income, and that it was utterly impossible for me to make such purchases. He replied that I might be supposed to have given bonds, or other securities, which were satisfactory to him. I represented to him that the French ambassador in London might by a Bill in Chancery compel me to declare upon oath whether I had or had not purchased his property; and if so, with what funds? And he answered, "Ces parjures-là ne blessent point la conscience." I then said, "You have already informed me that one-half of your property is settled on your children, and the easiest way of placing the whole of it in safety would be to settle the remainder on Madame la Duchesse." He exclaimed, "Parbleu, vous avez plus d'esprit que moi, et je ferai venir mon secrétaire sur-le-champ." An act in due form was instantly prepared, and, being registered in Dresden, became the subject of general conversation; but I considered his communications as confidential, and I said nothing as to the suggestion which I had offered, or as to my knowledge of the transaction.

He was also very apprehensive as to his personal safety, and said, "I fear that I may be carried off by some gens d'armes, and that no person will ever hear of me again." He then asked, whether, in the event of his being arrested, he should not request General Gaudi to intercede for him with the prime minister, Count Einsiedel? I answered that they had no doubt much personal regard for each other, but that in their respective positions it could not be supposed that the former could have any influence with the latter. "Then," replied Fouché, "I will write to the King of Saxony, inquiring what course he will pursue if an

order should arrive here for my arrest." He did so, though he was at that time French plenipotentiary: and he received from Count Einsiedel an answer, informing him that the King would under any circumstances act as became a man of honour.

On one occasion, when he was more than usually disquieted by the information which he had that morning received from Paris, he called on me, and after mentioning that he was in great danger, and that he wished to go into the Prussian dominions, he inquired if I would accompany him thither? I assented; and we went together to General Gaudi, who was not acquainted with the objects and motives of the intended journey, but seemed much astonished when Fouché abruptly said to him, "You once told me that you have an aunt who is settled in Silesia; and I should like to go and live with her." General Gaudi replied that his aunt was old and infirm, and not accustomed to company, and that she would not like to see a stranger. Fouché then conversed with General Gaudi on the choice of a residence, and was with great difficulty dissuaded from going to one of the ceded provinces, the governor of which entertained for him the strongest aversion. After we had left General Gaudi, I asked Fouché when he intended to depart? and he answered, "At twelve o'clock to-night." I told him that it would have a better appearance if he went by daylight: and I added, "You should prepare a passport for yourself." "No," replied Fouché; "I intend to travel under your passport." "How so?" I inquired. "As your valet-de-chambre," answered Fouché. I then said that I was willing to accompany him in his quality of French minister, but that I would not convey him under a false character, or smuggle him through the country as if he were contraband goods. He was much displeased, and employed by turns flattery and abuse; but I remained inflexible; and, as I would not accompany him in the manner which he proposed, he determined to remain at Dresden.

At length there appeared in France a law, or edict, which allowed the regicides to reside, at their own choice, either in Austria, in Prussia, or in Russia; and the Austrian minister desired Fouché to determine which of them he would

prefer. He wished to settle at Berlin, where, as he said, his advice would be very useful; but he found upon inquiry that this would not be permitted, and Breslau was proposed to him for a residence, which he did not approve, and he went into the Austrian dominions—first to Prague, where he lived very obscurely and with great economy—afterwards, and for a short time, to Linz on the Danube—and then to Trieste, where he died. His widow, who had a life-interest in half his property, re-married. His house at Paris was sold to Baron Rothschild; and it was said, but I know not with what truth, that he bequeathed his manuscripts to Louis XVIII.

It is impossible to close the book that records the rapid, even sudden, rise to power of the men whose course we have been contemplating, without reflecting upon the vanity and emptiness of the gratification held out to ambition, or vanity, or love of glory, by revolutionary times. That gratification is generally much vaunted as the more precious fruit of civil disorder, and no feature of revolution offers more attractions to the young, the ardent, the daring, than its tendency to exalt merit, and its opening a short path to distinction and to power, which a spirit that spurns the long and laborious ascent under regular governments, fondly takes, untired by the slipperiness of the road, and unscared by the precipices yawning on either side. All such spirits are impatient of the slow ascent to fame and influence to which all systems of policy confine the ambitious in ordinary times; and hence the delight with which they hail the subversion of ancient institutions, and the approach of wide-spreading change.

But to these men the portion of history which we have been examining reads an impressive lesson. No one endowed with even an ordinary share of prudence can be extravagant enough to prefer the twelve months' possession of power which the Decemvirs

obtained as the price of all their struggles, their perils, and their crimes, to the position which, slowly gained, would have been long and securely possessed under a regular government. No one setting before his eyes the chances of failure and of destruction which he must have to encounter, and the small probability of being numbered with the successful few, would ever deem the prize of some months' dominion, followed by an ignominious death, worth contending for at those hazards, to say nothing of the certain cost of being charged with the heaviest load under which the conscience can labour. The life, certainly the reign, of a demagogue is of necessity a short one. Even where religious bigotry and imposture combine with popular ignorance to give it an unnatural extension, it cannot in any civilized state last long. In France, where its despotism was the most uncontrolled, its duration was the shortest, its sufferings and its ignominy the most appalling.

It is thus that the fate of the revolutionary leaders, when duly weighed, is well fitted to teach men the wisdom for their own interest, even if virtue and duty were wholly disregarded, of preferring the sure though slow, the lasting though moderate, rewards which a settled order of things holds out to virtuous ambition or honest love of fame. Such a study may reconcile them, even the most impatient of them, to the duty of bridling their passions, and submitting to the conditions on which alone power and glory may be innocently enjoyed.

> "Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
> Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri."*

But these are not the only reflections which arise

* "Striving in genius, scaling still the heights
Of glory; toiling days and sleepless nights,
Among the wealthy the first place to gain,
And o'er a subjugated empire reign."

naturally in the mind, upon a near contemplation of the scenes of the revolution. We learn, when candidly examining the merits and the history of its great leaders, to distrust the general opinion of them which has prevailed, formed under the influence of the feelings naturally excited by the dreadful events of their day—events the horror of which almost inevitably tended to involve all that had any share of their guilt, in an indiscriminate charge of sanguinary and profligate ambition. The public voice might be excused for thus pronouncing one undistinguishing sentence of condemnation upon them at the time, and while the sentiments that had been raised by so bloody a tragedy retained their force. But subsequent authors and reasoners have too frequently fallen into the same error, and treated the subject as superficially as the ephemeral writers and the speakers of the day. The common, almost the invariable, course has been to make no distinction whatever between the different actors in the drama. Danton has been treated with the same severity as Robespierre; Camille and St. Just have received one award of condemnation. Nay, the wretched Marat, whom it would be a profanation of the name to call a statesman, has not been held up to greater execration and scorn than those who really, more or less, were entitled to be so called. A more calm examination of their history, for which survey the time may be admitted now to have arrived, begets far more than doubts upon the soundness of the commonly received opinion, and teaches us to distribute in very different and very unequal shares our praise and our censure. Even respecting Robespierre himself, it is probable that the pitch of the public voice has been somewhat too high, and that his bad and despicable character, dark as undeniably it was, had still some few redeeming traits to distinguish it from the Collots and the Billauds, by far the worst of the whole.

Allowance, too, must be made for the exaggerated, the exalted state of political feeling that prevailed among party leaders, and even among their followers, very generally in those dismal times. There can be no more certain proof of this than the fact that even at the present day, when time might be supposed to have calmed all the fervour of the revolutionary crisis, and reflection to have opened men's eyes to the degree in which they had been formerly misled, we find persons in France, of unquestionably virtuous principles, unable to bestow the just portion of censure upon the companions of their earlier years, and most reluctant to look back upon those scenes with a natural regret. I have been astonished to hear such persons characterize Collot d'Herbois as a well-meaning though misguided man (*bon homme, mauvaise tête*); and somewhat less struck, indeed, though still surprised, to find them hankering after the belief that whatever was done had been the fault of the Royalists and the Allies, while the all-atoning name of "patriot" covered the multitude of Decemviral sins, and the sole regard of every one who acted in those days was deemed to have been "*La Patrie.*"

It would be extremely wrong to suffer ourselves to be warped in our opinions by such prejudices, or to let them arrest the judgment required by the interests of truth and justice. Yet it would be equally contrary to both were we to exclude from our consideration the extenuating tendency of the undeniable fact, that all men in those times were more or less under the influence of the temporary delirium which the great change had produced; a delirium which rendered them alike insensible to their own sufferings, blind to their own perils, neglectful of their duties, and regardless of other men's rights.

But having discussed the moral, it remains to add the great political lesson which this important branch of history is so well fitted to teach—the incalculable

value of firmness on the part of those intrusted with the powers of government, whether executive, legislative, or judicial. The whole of the French Revolution is one continued example of the powers of intimidation and the dangers of fear. All the successive passages, even the darkest, are cleared up and satisfactorily explained by this consideration. At first apprehension, contagiously spreading into alarm, next rising to terror—that is the pivot on which all turned —that the governing rule of all conduct—that the common principle to reconcile all contradictions, to satisfy all conditions, to reduce all anomalies within rule. A moderate portion of courage in the rulers would have sufficed, if early displayed, to make what soon proved the scourge of the tempest fill the vessel's sails like a favouring breeze—to restrain within safe bounds the force which might have been used as an ally, but soon grew to a remorseless and a pitiless tyrant:—

> "Parva metû primo, mox sese attollit in auras,
> Ingredituque solo et caput inter nubila condit."*

* "The puny creature that can hardly scare
Our steps, swift rises hideous through the air,
Stalks o'er the earth resistlessly, and shrouds
Its horrid crest among the rolling clouds."

NECKAR.

FEW men have ever risen from humble, even obscure beginnings, to a station of vast importance, both for wealth and power, for personal aggrandizement and influence over the fate of the world, with so little of genius as Neckar; and it is a grateful refreshment to the mind of the historian, weary with contemplating successful vice or great resources expended in committing great crimes, to dwell upon one example of more ordinary merits recompensed by all the gifts of fortune, and stern virtue, unsustained by brilliant capacity, conferring upon its possessor supreme power and far-resounding fame.

The clerk in a Paris banking-house, though of a respectable and indeed ancient Genevan family, he became early in life, by the successful pursuit of commerce, one of the richest men in France. The student of letters for his amusement, and without anything like genius in the sciences or the *belles lettres*, he lived to be the centre of all literary society in the most refined European capital, to which he was a stranger by his birth. The trader first, then the envoy of the smallest state in Europe—a state rather known among other powers as the butt of their gibes than the companion of their councils—he rose to be chief minister of the greatest among them; and the young adventurer from Geneva, by his errors, or by his patriotism, as men may variously view it, lived to be the proximate cause of that mighty event which shook all Europe to its centre, and exercises to this hour an influence universal and unparalleled over the destinies of the world.

Neckar was sent from his father's house at Geneva to learn business in the banking-house of Vernet: he soon acquired the ascendant where he had been only clerk; and, becoming afterwards partner in the house of Thelluson, he at once, by his talents for business, established the splendid fortune of that great firm and became the architect of his own. Retiring at an early age from mercantile pursuits with an ample fortune, he was chosen resident for the republic of Geneva at the court of Versailles, and soon became universally esteemed in the circles of the aristocracy, as he had been in those of commerce, for his amiable manners and his strict integrity. His information was extensive, and it was accurate: he had especially studied finance, and was extremely knowing on all matters connected with it,—a subject of peculiar and universal interest at the time when he came into patrician society. His wealth, we may well suppose, added greatly to the charms of his society in a luxurious capital like Paris, and was not even without its effect on the courtly circles of Versailles. But his conversation and his manners were calculated to win their way independent of a brilliant fortune; the former—lively, cheerful, elegant, and instructive; the latter—simple, natural, and, if somewhat pedantic, yet honest and manly. Indeed, of that which the great vulgar are so wont to look down upon as pedantry, it may be observed, that its title to our respect is not trifling: for it necessarily implies intellectual qualifications in at least one department, and so much honesty and openness of character as will not consent, for fashion's sake, to wear a mask. It must be added that our French neighbours have always deemed pedantry and pedantic manners, a much lighter offence in the code of social taste than ourselves. In the gayest circles of Paris such a taunt goes but for little—nay, is often found rather a passport to notice, if not to respect; while the less frivolous English, as they deem themselves, turn from it with

aversion, or look down upon it with contempt. This difference, probably, arises from the greater zeal with which the Frenchman throws himself into any pursuit he embarks in, careless of his dignity, and fearless of the ridicule attendant upon those who go to extremes. He is, generally, therefore, prone to the very courses which are characteristic of the pedant, the man of a single idea, the enthusiast who, absorded in a single pursuit, forgets that others sympathize little with him. He has, as it were habitually and naturally, the pedantic diathesis, and hence is either insensible to its effects on others, or easily becomes patient of them himself.

But Neckar had consecrated his leisure to pursuits more important than shining in the society of either the mercantile or the aristocratic community. As early as 1773, his 'Eloge de Colbert' carried away the prize of the Academy; and when the anxiety respecting the public sustenance was at its height, he distinguished himself still more by his admirable essay on the corn-laws and corn-trade—'La Legislation et le Commerce des Grains.' From this period his accession to the management of the French finances was regarded as certain; and in 1777, when their derangement pressed the government most severely, on the eve of its embarking in the American war, he was clothed with the high office of Director-general.

Nothing could be more wise, nor anything more brilliant, than his first operations. He established order where he found confusion to prevail; where darkness and mystery shrouded each branch of the administration, he let in the wholesome light of day; in every department the inflexible enemy of fraud made strict honesty the basis of all his operations, and rigorously exacted from others the same purity of which he furnished himself so bright an example. He began by refusing the whole salary and emoluments attached to his office. Short-sighted men joined

with those whose interests were threatened by this course, in considering it as the fruit of a vain-glorious disposition. It was nothing of the kind: it was the wise and well-considered precaution of arming himself with the power to extirpate all abuses, and reduce all useless payments, and even to press hard upon the subsistence of individuals wherever the public good required the sacrifice. How else could he have suppressed six hundred places about Court and in the Treasury, at one blow—the mighty achievement which signalized his accession to power? But he stopped not there. Some of the most oppressive remnants of the feudal system were abolished; the heaviest of the taxes (the taille or property-tax) was limited and fixed; the most substantial reforms were introduced into the administration of hospitals and prisons; the foundation of yet more extensive improvements was laid in the establishment of Provincial Assemblies; and a general system of accounting was extended to all the branches of the administration, so as to exact a full pecuniary responsibility from each. It must be added as a set-off against the charges which involve this honest minister in the blame of occasioning the Revolution ten years later, that all the reforms of his first administration were prudently devised and framed upon a moderate scale, guided by well-considered views, and effected so gradually, that a second step never was taken until the safety and advantages of the first had been submitted to the only sure test, that of actual experience.

In some departments he had found resistance to his reforms, which his firmness, joined to his suavity of manner, and sustained by his unimpeachable integrity, enabled him to overcome. But Sartine, formerly chief of the police, who had been made minister of marine by the prime minister, Maurepas, reckoning on the support of his patron, refused to adopt the system of accounting which formed the corner-stone of Neckar's

whole plan; and Neckar prevailed on the king to supersede him, appointing in his room the Marechal de Castries, a man of the highest honour and greatest zeal for the public service. Maurepas never forgave this proceeding. Availing himself of the clamour raised by Neckar's famous 'Compte Rendu,' and by his ordinance for calling together Provincial Assemblies, so odious to the ancient Parliaments, he brought about the vexatious treatment which led to the resignation of the able and honest minister who in five years had changed a deficit of 35,000,000 of francs into a surplus of 10,000,000, without imposing one single new tax of any kind, and under all the burden of the war expenses, which had been added to those of the former peace establishment. It must, however, be admitted that, although Maurepas worked for this purpose, Neckar was not justified in resigning his office. The refusal of his demand to have the *entrée du conseil* (a seat in the cabinet) was hardly sufficient, if in all other particulars he had the firm support of the court; and, as nothing could exceed the distress into which his resignation plunged the royal family, so no effort was omitted for his restoration. It is generally believed that, had he been in office at the death of Maurepas, then fourscore years old and upwards, he must have succeeded to his place, and that he would certainly have prevented both the financial embarrassments which led to the Revolution, and the assembling of the States, which occasioned by the deficit, was its proximate cause. The courts of Vienna, Naples, and St. Petersburgh all besought him in vain to undertake the direction of their affairs as finance minister: but he preferred literary leisure; and his work on finance, published in 1784, had such success, that 80,000 copies of it were sold in a few days.

Calonne, who succeeded him in France, soon threw all into the confusion from which he had extricated

the revenue and expenditure of the country; and when Brienne became prime minister, after calling the States General together, and plunging the finances into still worse confusion than before, he was compelled again to send for Neckar, who came to the assistance of the nation, but came far too late; and he said so himself on consenting again to take office—"Why have they not given me the Archbishop's (Brienne's) fifteen months? But now it is too late." He found the public securities unsaleable in the market, the country threatened with famine, the Parliament in banishment, the Bastille filled with Deputies from the provinces, the whole country distracted with factious violence, and an immediate assembling of the States General distinctly promised. His name at once restored public credit—the feelings so strongly excited were calmed—the prison-doors flew open—the exile of the Parliament was ended—and the progress of famine was arrested by the arrival of provisions. But he also found two questions standing ripe for decision; on both his firmness failed; and either was sufficient to stay or to accelerate a Revolution. The property-qualification of Deputies to the States General he referred to the Notables, whom he most injudiciously re-assembled, and who decided against it. The proportion of the Tiers Etat to the nobles and the clergy in the States General he finally decided should be double of either, or equal to both, and decided, after having at first framed his report against this double proportion, nay, after having actually printed that document. A man so wanting in fixed opinions, or so infirm of purpose in pursuing his own views, was wholly unfit to guide the vessel of the state amidst the storms and currents of revolutionary times. A letter which he wrote on the eve of the States' assembling has been frequently cited and even admired. "Je vois la grande vague s'avancer; est-ce pour m'engloutir?" Had he done all in his power to turn it

back, or to protect the country from its fury—nay, had he done nothing to increase its volume and to accelerate its advance—this passage might have been deemed worthy of praise. But in him whose vacillation and incapacity had been such as we have just seen, a more silly observation, or one indicating more puerile vanity, can hardly be imagined. It even betrayed a selfish absorption in the contemplation of his own fate, wholly unworthy of the man and very unlike his general character. It looked as if his whole efforts had been bestowed upon endeavours to get himself out of his difficulties—as if his own escape or his own destruction alone occupied his thoughts at the moment of the crisis which his imbecile conduct had brought upon his country and the world.

A conduct beginning with decision may often end in irresolution; but it is rare, indeed, that vacillation, marking the earlier scenes of a great action, should become steadied and give place to manly determination. In the great question of voting by chambers or by individuals, which immediately brought on, and, indeed, involved, the decisive measure of Abbé Sièyes (one of his three grand strokes of policy*), the union of the three in one chamber, Neckar's irresolution continued as before; and he is understood to have obtained from the King, by next thing to compulsion, his letter of the 25th of June, sanctioning the union of the orders. But within a fortnight after this he was suddenly dismissed, and ordered to leave the kingdom. This was the signal of the Revolution, which broke out on the 14th of July, and Neckar's triumphant recall immediately followed the taking of the Bastille.

* The other two were the National Guard and the Departmental Division. Certainly it is rarely that so many and such vast projects have been found to proceed from the same quarter; and this accounts for the respect in which M. Talleyrand, and other French statesmen, not generally lavish of their admiration, always held a person, to all who saw him, at least during the last twenty years of his life, apparently much overvalued.

Now began that series of feeble and inconsistent propositions, yet more feebly and inconsistently supported—of compliances one day with the people, another with the court—of stupefied inaction, alternating with pointless and ill-conducted activity, which composed his second administration, and justly lost him the favour of the people, without for a moment gaining the confidence of the King, or the Nobles, or the Church. After ten months spent in the outward semblance of power, but without any real authority or even influence whatever, the most degrading position that man can fill, he quietly resigned his office and quitted the country. Nor was contrast more marked ever exhibited in this world, than between his former dismissal which, throwing all France into convulsion, was the immediate occasion of the Revolution, and his voluntary retirement less than a year after, which passed as unheeded as the most insignificant event of the day,—between his return to power on the shoulders of the people in 1789 and his journey towards the Lake of Geneva in 1790, through the same country, where his life was in hourly danger from the violence of the same people, among whose execrations he retreated from France.

As regarded his own tastes and feelings, this reverse did not greatly affect him; for, though not void of ambition, and accessible enough to vanity, he had passed the latter portion of his life, particularly the last ten months, in a state which he described to be one of unceasing torture, always in a false position, constantly responsible for proceedings which he could not control, and apprehensive at each moment of the most dreadful evils, which soon overtook the country in a measure yet more fatally abundant than his worst fears had foreseen. He now, therefore, felt his retirement from public life, and from France, torn by fierce factions, and the theatre of violent convulsions, as a relief, instead of a privation. In his quiet retreat at

Coppet, he could enjoy the society of the early friends whom he loved, and devote himself to those literary pursuits which he never abandoned. In the bosom of his accomplished family, too, he had resources of learned and social intercourse which are given to few indeed. Of his celebrated daughter, Madame de Staël, the literary fame thus early had spread through Europe; while his wife, beside performing all the duties of her station with exemplary fidelity, was also learned above the standard of ordinary women, and possessed some talents. But it was an amiable weakness of Neckar to overrate the capacity of this worthy woman in a degree somewhat ridiculous. She was extremely formal, precise, and pedantic; she was also (if it be any addition to these qualities) exceedingly tiresome, and her society was all but dull, however well informed. But her admiring husband saw and heard all her performances, whether from the press or in conversation, as master-pieces; he cultivated her with the observance of a humble votary; he watched her lips for the lessons of wisdom or the flashes of wit; and so little had the secret of her dulness, which all else knew, ever reached him, even to the extent of the most remote suspicion of that unfortunate and undeniable truth, that he would communicate to his guests before dinner, with the air of one who announces a pleasure at once exquisite and rare, as a treat in store for his company—"Ah, entendez-vous, Messieurs; nous allons avoir Madame Neckar à dîner aujourd'hui!" Her book upon Divorce is ably written, though heavily, and in a style forced, not natural. One chapter contains eloquent passages; and she espoused the side of the question most unpopular at the time, and looked down upon as that of narrow-minded and bigoted persons. There was, indeed, nothing more exemplary than the courage which this respectable person always showed in proclaiming and defending her opinions, religious and moral, in the

society of Paris, where they were not only unpopular, but the objects of general ridicule. Her principles were strongly rooted in her mind, and at all times firmly maintained in her conversation, as well as shown forth in her practice.*

This great merit was also that of her husband, who, on all occasions, in season and out of season, was ready to preach what he deemed the truth; careless whom it might offend, or to what attacks it might expose him. His strict notions of both public and private morality, were little to the taste of the court when he first appeared at Versailles. As little was his republican simplicity relished in the Finance Minister of the Grand Monarque. Least of all were his principles of economical reform calculated to please any department in the state. But those notions, and habits, and principles were never for an instant lost sight of by this honest man, nor ever moderated to suit the prevailing taste, nor ever disguised under any more pleasing exterior, than naturally suited his sentiments and appropriately clothed their character. If an honesty and a courage so rare both in statesmen, in courtiers, and in members of patrician society, led to the indulgence of a little self-gratulation, or, perhaps, self-admiration, in him who practised it, instead of smiling at him, as was the custom, for being somewhat vain of his virtue, we ought rather to confess not only that so great a merit is more than sufficient to redeem any such little weakness, but that the being conscious of the contrast which he presented to all others, was the inevitable consequence of their defects rather than of his frailty.

This courageous honesty was the greatest distinction of Neckar's public character; and it never failed him, though, during his second administration, his firmness

* This was the Mademoiselle Curchod whom Gibbon describes himself as having fallen in love with, while the young lady resided at Lausanne—the daughter of a respectable Swiss Pastor.

yielded to the numerous and almost inextricable difficulties by which he was surrounded. But, while we are left in unavoidable doubt whether any degree of resolution could have saved the state from the dismal scenes which followed his retirement, at least we can have no hesitation in pronouncing that, when he early saw himself performing the part of a sham minister, without any substantial power, he ought at once to have quitted the stage.

But this courageous honesty was by no means his only, though it was his chief, distinction, when compared with most other ministers. He was greatly their superior in point of information, both of general knowledge and of the science peculiarly belonging to politic men. His habits of business, too, were transferred from the counting-house to the bureau, while his Genevan education was not forgotten, hardly suspended, in the drawing-rooms of royalty or of fashion. His liberal opinions upon all subjects of government, as well as of economics, formed certainly a third peculiarity in a minister of "the times before the flood" of 1789; probably in a servant even of popular Monarchies. How few have served the limited and constitutional Sovereigns of England, at any period of our history, with such a steady regard to the interests of the people, so fixed and so practical a belief that their happiness is the end of all government, so rooted a determination to protect their rights wherever these could be asserted without danger from their licentiousness!

That such a minister, who had played such a part in the earliest crisis of the Revolution, and all whose sentiments wore a republican hue, should be eminently distasteful to Napoleon, ever since he had abandoned all democratic courses, is little to be wondered at. On his march to Marengo in 1800, he visited him at Coppet; and the First Consul—no longer that Buonaparte who had once crossed the same Alps

to subdue the same Italy under the title of "Member of the National Institute *and* General-in-Chief"—now thought proper to designate his venerable host as a "college tutor, very heavy and very turgid."* It was the love of liberty, however, that he secretly hated, not the love of letters, which he thus caricatured; and if it be said that he had to reproach the popular minister's former life with much of the violence which broke out in France during his time, justice should have suggested that, as far as intentions were concerned, Neckar uniformly took part against the people on the instant that he found their zeal for liberty degenerating into licentiousness.

Two faults, however, must be admitted to have alternately marked his scheme of conduct in this important particular, and they are perhaps the greatest and attended with the gravest consequences, both to a statesman's own fame and to the happiness of his country, of any that he can commit. He never made sufficient allowance for the momentum which popular influence acquires, and the fire which popular feelings kindle, when once a great movement is begun; but always seemed to reckon upon having the same power to control excesses after as before the excitement, forgetting that, though his was the same hand which had set the machine in motion, he had no longer to resist and to direct the same force. It was an almost equal error in an opposite direction, that, when he had taken a certain part, and that violence was found to be the result, he got squeamish about trifles, and resisted at a time when it would have been wisdom to yield; wholly forgetting the line which he had chosen, the inevitable excesses to which it led, and the folly of objecting to what inevitably followed from his own election. Hence with all his integrity, which was untainted—his talents for affairs, which were undeniable—his sway over the public mind,

* Régent de collége, bien lourd et bien boursoufié.

which at one time was unbounded, perhaps unparalleled—he has left behind him the memory of a second-rate statesman, whose good intentions are far more than counterbalanced by his bad judgment, and who, having ventured to pilot the vessel of state in a tempest without the firm hand of a steersman, can neither prevent the shipwreck of his charge nor of his reputation.

In private life Neckar was one of the most amiable of men, beloved by his friends, and in his family adored. His society was sought by those for whom neither his ample fortune nor brilliant station could have any charms; and his literary merits were of a very respectable order. To genius he made no pretensions; and his writings, though clear, argumentative, well informed, are somewhat heavy. But a *jeu d'esprit*, entitled 'Le Bonheur des Sots,' has been much admired as a lively and ingenious production, the nature of which may easily be guessed from the title; and it is no small glory attending it, that Talleyrand's answer to it, 'Le Bonheur des Gens d'Esprit,' was a complete failure, the only one recorded either in his writings or his sayings of that greatest of modern wits. Of his other works, the 'Dernières Vues de Politique et de Finance' is the best in every respect, though the defence of the celebrated 'Compte Rendû,' from the accidents of the time, made by far the greatest sensation. But the 'Dernières Vues' is both a work of great ability and of extraordinary vigour for an author of threescore years and ten; and it has the writer's usual merit of telling plain truths at a time the least friendly to their reception; for it foretells and unmasks the designs of Buonaparte against the liberties of France, long before the Consul's resolution to affect absolute power had been either disclosed by himself or discovered by the bulk of his countrymen.

MADAME DE STAËL.

NECKAR is hardly better known in our day as the Minister of Louis XVI. than as the father and friend of the most celebrated woman in modern times, perhaps in some particulars the most remarkable of her sex that has appeared in any age. If among statesmen her title to a place should be questioned, no one can deny that her writings and her conduct had an important influence upon the politics of Europe during many years; and, as the potentates in whose hands the destinies of nations were placed repeatedly acted towards her, some as benefiting by her support, others as injured by her opposition, nay, as she suffered persecution in consequence of her political influence exerted honestly for her principles and her party, it seems at once fair and natural to regard her title as confessed, and to number her among the political characters of the age.

It is, however, as an illustrious member of the republic of letters that she claims the highest place, and as such that she has the clearest right to the respect of posterity. She was undeniably a woman of genius; and she had this peculiarity among authors of her sex, that, while many have signalized themselves in the lighter walks of literature, and some in the more rugged field of science—while works of fancy have come from some female pens, and mathematical speculations from others—while an Agnesi has filled the professor's chair as an analyst in a celebrated university, a Chastelet has commented on Newton, a D'Acier on Homer, a Somerville (far ex-

celling them all) on Laplace,—Madame de Staël has written one of the finest romances that ever appeared, one combining entertainment with instruction; has discussed, with all the rigour of argument and all the powers of eloquence, some of the most difficult questions of politics and of morals; and has profoundly investigated the character, and weighed the merits, both of the various systems of philosophy, the different bodies of literature, and the diversified schemes of civil polity, which flourish or which fade in the several countries of Europe. Although it would not be correct to say that her varied works are without great faults, still less to affirm that she has left no room for other performances on the same subjects; yet it is certain, and it is universally admitted, that as yet they stand at the head of the productions which we possess on those several subjects. Her essay on Rousseau's writings; her 'Thoughts on Suicide;' her account of Germany; her 'Corinne,' or Italy described under the attractive form of a romance—all testify to her extraordinary powers, because each is at this hour the best book in its several kind of which we are possessed. Nor does it follow from this admission, that the first of these tracts may not have overrated the merits of Jean Jacques; that much superficial matter is not to be found in the 'Allemagne;' or that Italy may not hereafter be more philosophically, it can hardly be more strikingly, painted by another hand. But it must ever be a just subject of admiration to think that, in such difficult and various kinds of composition, a woman should have attained so great excellence, and of astonishment to reflect that the essays on Rousseau and on Suicide were the productions of a girl, one who had hardly attained the age of womanhood.

It is impossible for him who would truly represent the likeness of this extraordinary person, to separate her moral from her intellectual character, so closely

did they touch and so powerfully act on each other. Her warmth of feeling not only stimulated her industry, but it sharpened her perspicacity, whetted her attention, invigorated her reason, and inspired her fancy: because she felt with enthusiasm, she penetrated with sagacity; because her heart beat high with zeal, her imagination glowed with fervour; the genuine sentiments of a most kind and compassionate nature kindled to warmth her pathetic eloquence; her inextinguishable hatred of all that is cruel, or oppressive, or false, or mean, overflowed in a torrent of indignation against the tyrant and the impostor. How entirely she was under the dominion of her feelings when excited was known to her friends, who dreaded her impoverishment, because they saw that she was without the hardness which nature has bestowed on others as the means of self-defence. How readily she could forget all other things when her heart was touched, was singularly shown on one occasion when she acted a part in a dramatic performance, and, confounding her natural with her assumed character, bounded forward to the actual relief of a family whose distresses were only the theme of a fictitious representation.

The passions are ever eloquent: left to themselves, their natural expression becomes contagious, and carries away the spectator when the actor is manifestly, but vehemently, moved. All that can be wanting in this case is the correct taste which restrains extravagant emotions or unbecoming diction: for it requires but a moderate acquaintance with words and idioms to give vent to the feelings which agitate the soul; and the difference is wonderfully little between the effect produced by the greatest mastery over language in an artist of consummate power, and that which follows the mere ebullition of natural passion in the words of an untutored victim. But Madame de Staël was well read in the best authors; at the fountains of the purest French diction she had drunk often and deep; her

taste was improved by the converse of highly-gifted men; much practice in writing had made the use of her own language easy to her: the intercourse of society had given her the faculty of extemporary speaking; and to the mastery over her own she added a far more familiar acquaintance with foreign tongues than almost any Frenchman ordinarily enjoys. No wonder that with her vehement feelings she became almost immediately one of the most eloquent writers and speakers of the age. Her works bear testimony to this proposition in part; but whoever had only read without hearing her would have formed an imperfect idea of her extraordinary powers.

It must, however, be added, that though the clear expression of her meaning, the flow of her harmonious periods, the absence of monotony, the occasional felicity of illustration, the generally correct statement of an opinion or an argument, the striking and lively and picturesque description, all shine throughout her page, yet we seldom meet with any imagery of peculiar originality or beauty, scarcely ever with any passage of condensed resistless force; and in the diction we are always reminded of the unpassable gulf which separates all foreigners who write in French, even those who, like the Genevans, have no other mother-tongue, from the Scarrons, the Voltaires, the Mirabeaus, to whom the purest, most idiomatic, and most racy language was familiar, and in whose writings it had an irresistible charm. It is a singular circumstance that, as Rousseau, who, with all his natural eloquence, wrote in inferior French, has left one work unlike all the rest in this respect, so has Madame de Staël given us a piece, and of a like description, which immeasurably excels her other and more important writings in the beauty of its diction. The 'Confessions' of Rousseau as far excels the 'Nouvelle Heloise' in the excellence of its French as it falls below that production in the dignity of its subject. But it shows a marvellous power of elevating

the lowest, vilest, often the grossest objects of contemplation, by the exquisite diction in which their description is clothed, and it is written in a tongue racy and natural as the best portions of Voltaire. The 'Dix Ans d'Exile' of Madame de Staël, in like manner, though resembling the 'Confessions' in no other particular, is yet far superior to her other works in the purity and genuine Gallicism of the composition. It is in the same way that when Mirabeau, the father, laid aside the pedantries of his sect, and wrote letters on family affairs to his brother, the Bailli, his style became one of the very best and most interesting and most original, instead of nearly the dullest and most formal and least readable in which a Frenchman's thoughts were ever conveyed.

The assertion so frequently made, that Madame de Staël had no wit, is true and it is false. If made absolutely, and so as to comprehend all wit, the choice of witty and pointed expressions, the striking combination of ideas, the unexpected illustration of one thing by reference to another—nothing can be more unfounded. Hardly a page of her writings but refutes it at once. But it is quite as certain that it was rather in witty expressions than in witty ideas that she abounded; and it is undeniable that she had little or no sense of the ludicrous, whether in persons or in things—and was thus without any humour or relish of humour, as well as averse to, or incapable of bringing any powers of ridicule to bear upon an adverse argument. Whoever would deny her powers of ready illustration, or of happy repartee, happy both in force and in delicacy, must have known her only through very bad reporters, persons unfair towards her, or incapable of appreciating her.—Napoleon having, during the hundred days, sent some one to express the want he felt of her to aid in establishing the constitution, received for answer—"Il s'est bien passé de constitution et de moi pendant douze ans; et à present même

il ne nous aime guère plus l'une que l'autre."*—A man of learning and talents, but of sensitive vanity, having made before her a somewhat intemperate sally, because she had said that his country (Germany) produced no men of genius; which he plainly said was personal to him—"Avouez donc, monseigneur (said she to a prelate who sat beside her), qu'il n'y a pas de chose si sotte que la vanité ne fasse faire aux gens d'esprit."†

In a person so full of warm affections, so fond of the natural in character, and so romantic in many of her tastes, it was strange to observe so entire an absence of all love for natural scenery. She was a great lover of poetry; of acting she was passionately fond; in music she took the greatest delight, and even excelled in singing, though she cultivated it but little: but for natural scenery she had no taste; could travel through a romantic country without taking her eye off the page she was reading; and lived on the lake of Geneva and within view of the Alps, without ever casting a look at either rugged mountain or blue water. Thoroughly honest, however, and hating affectation in all its forms, she could never pretend to what she did not feel, though at the risk of having a defect in her taste exposed: so, when some one was expatiating with fervour on the pleasure which a tender heart like hers must take among green shades and romantic rivulets, "Ah (she exclaimed), il n'y a pour moi de ruisseau qui vaille celui de la Rue de Bac."‡

In truth she existed for discussion, for observation of men, for the exciting interest of all national affairs. Society was the element in which she lived, and moved, and had her being; and the society of Paris was almost

* "For twelve years he has done without either a constitution or me; and even now he has not much more liking for one than for t'other."

† "Admit, then, my Lord, that there is nothing too foolish for vanity to make a clever man do."

‡ "Oh! there's no rivulet to my mind like that of the Rue de Bac."—[One of the currents that fall into the Seine in Paris, through a well-frequented street in the Faubourg St. Germain.]

alone deemed society in her time. It was here she shone; it was here her influence was felt: it was by her power in this sphere that she could further those principles of liberal but orderly and humane policy to which she was devotedly attached. Her political writings had greatly extended her influence over that important portion of the French nation; and her conversation was singularly calculated to consummate her power. Hereditary in her family, and as well by the mother's as the father's side, was the undaunted spirit which led her to profess her opinions, whatever odium they might draw upon her from the people, whatever contempt from the aristocracy, whatever persecution from the established authorities of the State. When the scaffold was hourly wet with the blood of the royalists, and the Queen was brought to her trial among the rest, Madame de Staël had the courage to publish her defence of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette. When the Consulate was formed which plainly indicated the approaching supremacy of Napoleon, she openly erected the standard of opposition to the aspiring chief, and made her house the centre of the party which attacked him in the Tribunate under the conduct of her intimate friend, Benjamin Constant. Failing in all attempts to gain her over or to silence her, Napoleon soon had recourse to reprisals; and his assumption of arbitrary power was signalized by her banishment from Paris, the greatest punishment he could inflict upon her. In this hostility to the enemy of liberty and of peace she persevered during the remaining ten years of his reign, although the two millions of the debt owing to her from the government were in consequence never paid until the period of the sudden and unexpected restoration. It would not be easy to name the individual who contributed more towards the conservation of that hatred of Napoleon's dynasty, and that zeal for its subversion, which led to the restoration, at a time when so many

even of the Bourbon party had in despair joined the party of their adversaries, and followed the apparently resistless fortune of Napoleon. It is not always that exiled kings are on their restoration ungrateful to the friends of their adversity; and Louis XVIII. repaid to the daughter of Neckar the two millions which he had lent to the State during the disastrous period of his second administration.

That the character of this extraordinary woman had some weaknesses, and that her understanding had some defects, it would be foolish to deny. The former certainly, perhaps also the latter, had their origin in the great warmth of her affections. Her nature was essentially good, kind, loving; and, as her attachments were not slowly formed, so were they not indulged by halves. But, if she gave herself up heartily to their influence, they were not the less firm, steady, and enduring. No one was less fickle in her friendships, and no one was less disposed to quit a subject or a pursuit which had excited her interest, however suddenly that excitement had been produced. Full of enthusiasm, she was yet constant; prone to vehement feelings, she was without violence either of temper or disposition; ardent in her affections and determined in her enmities, her whole composition contained not a particle of spite, or gall, or revenge. All was noble and generous, to her very faults; nothing mean or paltry belonged to her understanding or her heart.

It is however to be observed that this ardent temperament, which was often found subversive of prudence in conduct, proved extremely prejudicial to the success of her intellectual efforts. From hence proceeded a proneness to receive erroneous impressions; to reason from the feelings; to be satisfied with a sentiment, or even a phrase, as if it had been an argument; to hasten over the ground towards a conclusion, from finding it more agreeable to occupy any favourite position than win the way to it by legiti-

mate steps. The Genevan character is marked by a disposition to theorize, rather perhaps to coin little theories, small bits of doctrine, petty systems which embrace the easy corners of some subject. That Madame de Staël was wholly exempt from this besetting sin of her country it would be incorrect to affirm; but she redeemed it by the greater extent of her views in general, and by the hardihood of her speculations upon the most interesting questions; and her writings, both in subject and in style, had little indeed of that precision, self-satisfaction, microcosmic feeling, which may be traced in so large a proportion of the works that come from the banks of the Leman Lake. The tone of the sentiments was also abundantly more liberal and less ascetic than could satisfy the code of the city of Calvin.

Having mentioned her connexion with the great little republic by family, we should add that almost all her patriotic feelings were domiciled in France. Whoever witnessed her chagrin, occasionally approaching to despair, in the spring of 1814, when the consummation so long devoutly prayed for by her and her party had arrived, and, Napoleon being overthrown, the Allies entered Paris, must recollect how uncontrollably the Frenchwoman burst forth and triumphed over the politician and the cosmopolite. When Lord Dudley, half in jest, half seriously, expressed his hope that the Cossacks would reach Paris and nail a horseshoe on the gates of the Tuileries, her alarm and her indignation knew no bounds, and she could only exclaim, "Quoi donc cette belie France!" almost suffocated by her feelings. The moderation of the Allies mitigated the acuteness of these during the remaining period of the occupation; but the subject of the capture was one to which she ever referred with a bitterness of spirit well calculated to read a useful and a solemn lesson. It is true she endeavoured to see in that great event only a new cause of hating Napoleon, to whose tyranny and ambition she ascribed

the fall of France; but it is also much more than probable that, had she ever again been called to choose between the worst domestic faction, even the worst domestic thraldom, and its subjugation effected in that of her country, she would have said, "No more foreign armies;" and it is very certain that, if the same option had been presented to her mind before France had ever been overrun, and she had foreseen all she felt on the capture of Paris, she would have rejected this as the worst of all consummations, and withheld all aid to its accomplishment. The inglorious end of Moreau, whose fall many might pity, but whose memory no one respects, adds a striking enforcement to the same patriotic lesson.

The public and the personal character of individuals, always nearly allied, are in women inseparably connected; so that in describing the one both must have been pourtrayed. But one peculiarity remains to be added, and it is entitled to distinguished praise. Those persons who are much more learned than their class or order, the self-taught, the *οψιμαθεις*,* and chiefly women well instructed, are somewhat like persons who have risen unexpectedly and quickly to great wealth, letter-proud as these are purse-proud—apt to look down upon others whose resources are more slender—very apt to fancy both that their own means are boundless, and that none else possess any at all. Accordingly, beside the love of displaying their stores, it is commonly observed of such scholars that they both believe themselves to know everything, and conceive others to know nothing. But the illustrious woman of whom we are speaking was very far above such a weakness. None less than she made a parade of her acquirements; none more deferred to others, or more eagerly availed herself of all opportunities to increase her information. Indeed in society, though naturally fond of shining, she threw herself far too heartily into the conflict to let her think of exhibit-

* Persons late-taught.

ing her knowledge; and, if she delighted in the exercise of her eloquence, (as who that possessed it would not?) she never oppressed her hearers with talk for the mere display of reading, nor ever showed the least indifference to the merits of kindred or superior spirits.

The religious feelings of Madame de Staël were always strong, and in the latter part of her life they gained an extraordinary ascendant over her. The originality of her genius made her occasionally indulge in peculiar views on this as on all other subjects. But, as her belief in Revelation was sincere, her habits were devout without superstition, and her faith was strong without the least tincture of bigotry or intolerance. She successfully inculcated the same principles in her children; and her daughter both illustrated the Christian Gospel by her writings, and exemplified its beauties in her life.

The warmth of her affections has been recorded: in her family, it is hardly necessary to add, these found the greatest scope and were in the most constant play. But the predominant feeling of her soul was filial love. Her father had ever been her most confidential and attached friend, from whom she had no thought or feeling of her heart concealed. Devotion to him through life, and the most religious and tender veneration for his memory when she lost him, seemed to occupy her whole mind. By her own children she was cherished with the same ardent affection become hereditary; they, and in an especial manner the Duchess de Broglie, were well worthy of the love she ever bore them; and if, to celebrate the capacity of women, as well as to prove how gracefully the rarest gifts of the understanding may be combined with the kindliest dispositions of the heart, the moralist will naturally point towards the illustrious mother, he will also name the admirable daughter, if he would present to the love and respect of mankind the purest example of every female virtue, and of all the accomplishments and all the charms that can adorn the softer sex.

MIRABEAU FAMILY.

FROM dwelling upon one of the most delightful sights which the history of distinguished characters presents to the view, a family group of celebrated persons whose virtues even exceeded their genius, and whose lives were spent in more harmony and more tender affection than are often the inmates of the cottage, we are now to turn our eyes upon a picture as different as can well be conceived, and only in the talents and celebrity of its subjects bearing any resemblance to that on which we have been looking. But the contemplation is full of interest, and by no means devoid of instruction.

The great celebrity of Mirabeau, the brilliant part which he performed in the beginning of the French Revolution, and the influence which he exerted over the early course of that memorable event, have given an interest to his private history which belongs to that of hardly any other individual who never mounted a throne. Accidental circumstances combined with these considerations at once to excite and to gratify the curiosity of the world respecting him. The domestic quarrels of which he was, if not the cause, certainly the occasion, and the disclosures to which the temper and the indiscretion of the parties led, had made the name and the fortunes of this remarkable person familiar to all Europe, as a son, a husband, and a lover, long before he was known upon the great theatre of state affairs, or even in the republic of letters. That he has been more admired for his genius than he deserved is a probable, although it can by no

means be set down as a clear proposition. That his moral character has been blackened by prejudice and by party, while it has been misunderstood through ignorance of his circumstances and situation, seems to be a matter of no doubt at all. There is, perhaps, no second instance of an individual whose faults have been committed under such a pressure of ill-treatment to besiege and force his virtue, rather than of temptation to seduce and betray it. Still less does history present any parallel to the injustice which has been done him by the world, even by those who had no prepossession against him—by the public and by individuals—an injustice which has consisted in uniformly listening to all that his enemies, chiefly of his own family, said against him—never to any of his own statements—nor even to any of the proofs that existed against those enemies. There is this peculiar to the family quarrels of the Mirabeaus, that in all other such controversies it has become a kind of maxim with the world to punish the parties, if not for their private dissensions, at least for their public disclosures, by believing that all of them were more or less to blame; by declining to be very nice in apportioning their several shares of the censure; and by generally considering those shares as nearly equal. In the instance of Mirabeau alone this rule has been excluded; and, the whole blame being cast upon him, his father and his family have escaped all visitation. But the publication, in 1834 and the subsequent year, of his Memoirs, with the correspondence of the family, has occasioned a much more equal distribution of censure, and has introduced us to an acquaintance which we never before could have with two others of the family,—the father, till then only known by his obscure writings on political economy, and the uncle, never known at all.

The celebrated Marquis de Mirabeau, father of the Count, and head of that noble family, was one of the founders of the sect of Economists in France,—indeed,

after Quesnai, its chief patriarch. He was also well known as the author of several important works upon its doctrines, and distinguished for his practical attention to economics as a considerable landowner and a patrician of a most ancient house. But they who had known, or fancied they knew, this distinguished individual the best, find themselves, upon opening the volumes lately published, in the presence of a personage entirely strange to them, and of whose nature, habits, and character they had previously no kind of knowledge. Nothing in truth can be more entirely unlike than the philosopher and the man; the liberal enlightened *Economist* and the haughty aristocratic noble; the friend of Quesnai and the father of Mirabeau; the *Ami des Hommes** and the Père de Famille. But all this is not without example; indeed, such discrepancies between men's public and their domestic characters are far from rare. The difference here is carried unfortunately farther. Justice—a rigorous love of the strictest justice—is the characteristic of the Marquis and of his sect; but his treatment of his son offers one perpetual scene of all justice grossly outraged. To observe moderation,—to regard the useful end of all things,—to act as if they were born not for themselves but for mankind,—was the very motto of the Economists:—

> Secta fuit, servare modum, finemque tueri,
> Naturamque sequi, patriæque impendere vitam;
> Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.

But the Marquis's predominant passion was family pride; moderation neither in this nor in any other feeling was ever for an instant the inmate of his mind, nor the regulator of his thoughts; and he always spoke, and wrote, and acted in private life as one who never for an instant of his days doubted that the world was made for the *order* (not the *sect*) he belonged to, and that

* The title of the Marquis's most famous work.

his first and highest duty was to keep the Mirabeau family among the first of that favoured class.

To follow the dictates of nature, to devote their lives to the cause of truth, was the residue of the Economist motto. But the most cruel prepossession against his first-born,—the most refined cruelty of treatment which his ingenuity could devise for that child,—the greatest finesse of every kind employed to ensnare him;—even the expedient of leaving him in wretched circumstances, and restoring him to liberty, in order that he might either terminate his existence in despair, or forfeit his life to the law—accompanied with an adulterous connexion which made his own wife leave his house—such are the traits of private character which these volumes represent as belonging to the lover of nature and truth; and these traits are for the most part represented under the infallible testimony of his own hand.

But under that hand we have proofs of a difference still more marvellous, and of which there is certainly no other example. The author of the most dull, heavy, uninteresting books, in the most tiresome, insipid, almost unbearable style, is the writer of about the very best, the most lively, the most entertaining letters, in a style which, for originality, raciness, force, felicity of diction, has scarcely a rival!

The Marquis was born in 1715, the eldest surviving son of a family esteemed ancient and noble even in Provence, and established there for above five centuries. It was the family of Riqueti, or Arrighetti, originally from the neighbouring territory of Italy, and which has produced several eminent men; although it is said that the relationship of the most famous of them all, Riqueti the engineer, and author of the Languedoc canal, was denied by the preposterous and barbarous pride of the clan. He was, like all the elder branches of noble French houses, placed betimes in the army: made a Chevalier de Malte at three years of age; an

ensign at fourteen; soon after a captain; served with great credit and even distinction at the siege of Kehl and Philipsbourg, and at the battles of Dettingen and Clusen; and in 1743, at the age of twenty-eight, received the cross of St. Louis. The death of his father having some years before placed him in a state of independence, he now quitted the army; and leaving also the order of Malta, he married the Marquise de Saulvebeuf, a widow and a maid; for according to the admirable arrangements of the old *régime* in France (that perfection of patrician wisdom and felicity), she had been married exactly at twelve years old to a gentleman advanced in years, and who, as frequently happened, accomplished his burial before he consummated his marriage. This second marriage did not prove happy in the end, nor do we see who but the philosophical husband is to blame for it. The lady was young, rich, and noble, but not handsome: her virtue was beyond suspicion, however; and, this not satisfying the Marquis, after she had lived fifteen years in peace and comfort with him, and borne him eleven children, he quarrelled with her, took into his house Madame de Pailly, a fascinating young Swiss lady; lived with her openly; turned his wife out of doors; and was for fifteen years engaged in a course of litigation with her, and of cruel as well as treacherous proceedings against her, which made both wretched, both the subject of universal talk, and both the objects of general blame, without profiting any human being, except Madame de Pailly, and his cunning old valet, and the lawyers, and the spiteful gossips of the Paris drawing-rooms.

His chief and noble purpose in quitting the profession of arms was to lead a life of literary retirement, and to improve the condition of his rural dependents. Towards these his conduct was always perfect; it was sensible, just, kind; he was their real father, and they were the only children who uniformly found in him the virtues of the parental character. He first went to his château

in Provence; but neither the distance from Paris, nor the state of the country there, suited his spirit or agreed with his taste. The reason he assigns for quitting the residence of his ancestors is abundantly characteristic of the aristocratic temperament, which was his master through life, and the source of almost all his own errors and his family's misfortunes:

"On n'y pratiquait plus ce culte de respect attaché à des races antiques, dont la toute puissance est maintenant méconnue; on ne s'y prosternait plus devant les vieilles races et les gros dos de Malte; enfin la province, totalement conquise par *l'écritoire*, contenait plus d'animaux armés de plumes que vingt-deux royaumes bien policés n'en devraient renfermer, espèce la plus vénimeuse et la plus épidémique pour un seigneur."*

Accordingly, he purchased the estate of Bignon, fifteen miles from Sens and Nemours, and, soon after, an hotel in Paris. Then and there began the career of philosophy which he ran for half a century, and which only terminated with his life, about the beginning of the French Revolution, when, at the age of seventy-five, he left the world with a reputation for virtue greatly exaggerated, and for talents much below his due. No less than twenty-two works claim him for their author; but those which alone are now well known are 'L'Ami des Hommes,' 'Théorie de l'Impôt,' 'Philosophie Rurale,' and 'Education Civile d'un Prince.' Beside these voluminous writings, he contributed a vast number of papers to the 'Journal d'Agriculture' and the 'Ephémérides du Citoyen,' the former of which works reached the bulk of thirty and the latter of forty volumes.

* "There was no longer that worship of respect for ancient extraction, whose omnipotence is now-a-days unknown; there was no longer the prostration before old families and grand crosses of Malta; in a word, the province, wholly subdued by the ink-stand, had more animals armed with pens than two-and-twenty well-regulated kingdoms ought to have contained—the race most venomous and most pestilent for a feudal lord."

It may easily be imagined how joyfully such a brother was received into the sect of the Economists, whose zealous supporter he proved, and indeed whose second chief he was acknowledged to be. To their spirit of party, or the more intense attachment which sectaries feel for each other, it is perhaps mainly owing that his faults were so lightly passed over, and his domestic prejudices shared so largely by the French public. As for any active virtues that he displayed, they were confined to his industrious propagation of the *Economical* doctrines, and his humane and enlightened government of his peasantry. He mingled, as was usual among our neighbours, even for philosophical patricians, in the society of Paris; and, as was quite of course in the happy times of legitimate government, he was sent to prison by a *lettre de cachet*, the offence being his work on taxation, which gave umbrage to the *Fermiers Généraux*, and cost him a short imprisonment in the Vincennes fortress, and some weeks' banishment to his estate. The rest of his actions, which brought his name before the public, were his scandalous proceedings against the members of his family, and chiefly his wife and his eldest son.

The next personage in the family group is the Bailli de Mirabeau, the Marquis's brother. A more gallant, honest, amiable, and indeed sensible man, it would be hard to find in any circle or in any situation of life. Partaking of his brother's family pride, but never his follower in suffering it to extinguish the better feelings of his nature; just to a degree of romantic scruple; simple, honest, and open as a child; brave to a fault, so as even to signalize himself in a country, an age, and a profession, where the highest valour was epidemical; kindly in his dispositions, so as to devote his whole time and resources to making others happy; domestic and affectionate in his habits, so as to live for

his brother and his nephew, when his vow precluded his having progeny of his own; religious without intolerance; strictly chaste and pure himself, without austerity towards others; and withal a man of the most masculine understanding, the quickest and even liveliest wit, the best literary taste—the Bailli de Mirabeau presents to our admiration and esteem one of the most interesting characters that ever showed the very rare union of whatever is most attractive with whatever is most respectable. His love and respect for his brother, both for his eminent qualities, and as head of his house, is one of the strongest features in his character; but it is tempered with every feeling of tenderness towards those against whom the Marquis was most bitterly prejudiced; and it leads to constant efforts towards disarming his brother's animosities. His proud independent spirit is shown in the treatment which all who would have encroached upon it were sure to meet at his hands, however exalted their rank or predominant their influence, and without the least thought of any remote effect which his high carriage might produce upon his most important interests. Of this we have an interesting trait in the answer he made to Madame de Pompadour, with whom a good understanding was held essential by the minister Nivernois, before he could place him at the head of the marine department, as he wished to do. He had succeeded to admiration in captivating the royal mistress at the first interview, by exhibiting the graces both of his person and his wit, when she chose to remark what a pity it was that the Mirabeaus were so wrong-headed *(que tous ces Mirabeau soient si mauvaises têtes)*. "Madame," (was the answer at once so honourable to his spirit, so creditable to his wit, and so fatal to his views,) "Madame, il est vrai que c'est le titre de légitimité dans cette maison. Mais les bonnes et froides têtes ont fait tant de sottises, et perdu tant d'états, qu'il ne serait peut-être pas fort imprudent

d'essayer des mauvaises. Assurément, du moins, elles ne feraient pas pis."*

This excellent man was born in 1717, being about two years younger than his brother. In three years he was received into the Order of Malta, in which he lived and died: served from the age of twelve in the navy; was wounded and taken prisoner by the English; was made *Capitaine de vaisseau* at thirty-four, and governor of Guadaloupe the year after: retired to Europe for his health in 1755; and next year was seriously wounded at the siege of Port Mahon. During the rest of the war, he had staff appointments in the marine department, and was in many dangerous battles and bombardments. He then was recompensed for his wounds and his thirty years' service by the complete neglect of a profligate and ungrateful court, which drove him into retirement; and he went to Malta, where he remained devoted to the affairs of the Order till he obtained a *Commanderie* in 1766, which carried him into France; and he there devoted the rest of his honourable life to literary ease.

Of Madame du Saillant, married into the elder branch of the amiable and revered family of Lasteyrie,† but little is known. She was the eldest and most gifted of the Marquis's daughters. Her sister, Madame de Cabris, though less clever and accomplished, would in any other family have passed for a wonder; but her life and habits were profligate, and the Mirabeau annals often note the exploits of a certain Briançon, her lover, a person of coarse manners, vulgar cunning, and dishonourable habits, whom nevertheless the Marquis

* "Madam, it may be true that such is the true mark of legitimacy in the family; but the good and cool heads have committed so many follies, and ruined so many states, that possibly it might not be very imprudent to try the bad ones. Assuredly, at least, they could not do worse."

† Count Charles Lasteyrie is a younger brother of this house: he is known, respected, and beloved by all the friends of humanity and liberal principle; and it gives his friend some satisfaction to have the honour of here mentioning his name.

thought fit to employ, partly as a spy and partly as a thief-catcher, to entrap or to seize his son. Nor is there any of those annals more painful, we might almost say disgusting, than that in which this low creature plays his part. Of Madame de Pailly much less appears directly, though her mischief-making hand is perpetually seen in all the history of the family; but the exquisite delicacy of the Bailli, and his prodigious respect and tenderness for his brother, made him shun all mention of her, and all allusion to her except on one occasion, when he perceived her influence hard at work to produce a new quarrel between the father and the son, as soon as they had been restored to each other's society after a separation of ten years, and immediately after they had seized the opportunity of her absence from the château to become somewhat cordial together. Then it is that the good Bailli indites some letters full of sense, and no less honourable to his heart than to his head.

"Trop de gens se mêlent de tes affaires; tu me comprendras si tu veux; que tout ce qui te parait obscur soit éclairci par toi-même, et point d'yeux étrangers, surtout des yeux féminins; plus ces yeux-là ont d'esprit et sont aimables, plus il faut s'en méfier, comme de ceux d'une belle Circé, derrière laquelle l'esprit de domination et de jalousie s'établit et s'insinue, de manière que les plus grands hommes en sont les dupes. Tu me dis, pour t'obstiner à m'envoyer ton fils et à me le laisser, le supposant rejoint à *la Cigale ayant chanté tout l'été*, que près de toi *sainte Jalouserie*, comme disait notre mère, se logerait entre les deux belles-sœurs, si celle d'Aix était chez toi; tu cites pour cela le passé. Tu te méprends à ce qui fut dit alors, et tu adaptes les paroles à l'objet qu'elles n'avaient pas, et point à celui qu'il était tout simple qu'elles eussent; car quelqu'un ne voulait pas qu'il y eût de coiffes dans la maison; mon chapeau même y déplaisait. Les femmes ne savent qu'intriguer, surtout les femmes d'esprit, sorte d'animal le plus dangereux de tous; celle en qui tu as une trop forte confiance est comme les autres; veut être la

maîtresse: tout ce qui peut faire obstacle à cet empire, ou le partager, lui est désagréable, et en est haï cordialement. Règle générale et sans exception, toute femme, dans sa position, veut gouverner absolument, et elle comme les autres; je ne saurais me rappeler mille petits traits, même vis-à-vis de moi, qui, comme tu crois bien, ne m'en souciais guère; mais ce qui à moi, homme tout-à-fait libre et indépendant, ne me faisait rien, choque beaucoup les enfans; elle n'a jamais aimé aucun des tiens; bien est-il vrai que, sauf Saillanette, tout le reste ne paraissait pas très-aimable; mais Caroline elle-même, notre douce et paisible Caroline, la femme la plus émolliente qui fut jamais, Caroline, qui n'a des yeux que pour son père, son mari, et ses enfans, et qui t'est si fort attachée, tu te tromperais fort si tu croyais que l'autre l'aimât; compte que, sans me mêler trop dans les choses, je vois à peu près tout, et je laisse aller, parce que je sais qu'on ne peut pas empêcher la rivière de couler."*

* "Too many folks are meddling with thy concerns; thou wilt know what I mean if thou choose; but mind that what in this letter seems obscure is spelt by thine own eyes and no others, above all no female ones; the more these are lively and attractive, the more should we mistrust them, like those of a fair Circe, behind whom the spirit of domination and of jealousy takes post, and works its way so as to make the greatest men its dupes. Near thee, sayest thou, Sainte Jalouserie, as our mother called it, would lodge herself between the two sisters-in-law, if the Aix one were with thee; and all this to confirm thee in sending thy son and leaving him with me, supposing always to have found the Grasshopper after singing all the summer. Thou art clean mistaken in what was then said, and apply it to a wrong matter, instead of the one thing plainly meant; for some one would have no caps in the house, and did not even like my hat. Women are only fit for intrigue, especially clever women, the most dangerous animals of all: she thou trustest so much is like the rest of them; would be mistress, finds all that would oppose or divide with her disagreeable, and heartily hates them. A general rule, and without any exception—'Every woman in her own department would rule absolute;' and this one like the rest. I cannot recollect the thousand little proofs of it even towards myself, who, thou knowest well, never minded it. But what to me signified nothing, wholly free and independent as I am, annoys exceedingly the children; she never liked any of them. True though it be that, except Saillanette, the others were not over likable; but Caroline herself, our soft and quiet Caroline, the most softening woman in all the world—Caroline, who has only eyes for her father, her husband, and her children, and who is really attached to thee, —thou'dst be mightily mistaken in supposing t'other liked her. Be sure that without interfering in things, I see nearly all that goes on, and I let it pass because I know that there's no stopping the river as it runs."

The Marquis thus answers—

"J'ai toujours vu, ou à peu près, les défauts des gens que j'aime. Je ne vois même bien que ceux-là : mais, faute d'archanges, il faut aimer des créatures imparfaites. Il ne faut pas même avoir vécu la moitié de mon âge, pour s'être persuadé de cela, sans quoi l'on se prendrait bien en aversion soi-même. Tu as grande raison de dire que les mouches incommodent plus que les éléphans ; et, quand nous voulons voir une mouche par le venin, nous en faisons un éléphant de notre faciende. Je t'assure, par exemple, que la personne dont nous parlions, et sur qui tu décoches des sarcasmes tranchans et affilés par la queue, comme disait Montagne, m'a dit, plus de cinq cents fois peut-être, dans la longue suite de mes secousses, où il s'est trouvé bien des mécomptes et des faussaires ; *bien d'honnêtes gens s'intéressent véritablement à vous ; le public même s'indignerait de vos malheurs, si vous ne les portiez vous-même ; mais vous n'avez vraiment que deux cœurs à vous, le bon Bailli et moi.*"*

The Bailli's answer is also admirable :—

"*Le bon Bailli ! le bon Bailli !* eh ! par saint Polycarpe, monsieur le marquis et mon très-cher frère aîné, avec qui diable veux-tu que mon excellence rabâche, si ce n'est avec toi ? *Le bon Bailli !* La personne qui a dit ce mot a fait acte de fausseté ; *le bon Bailli* le sait, et le voit depuis longtemps sans le dire ; il s'est bien, dès 1750, aperçu que cette personne ne l'aimait pas, et tu l'aurais bien vu, si elle avait

* "I have always been aware, or nearly so, of the faults of those I love. Indeed I see nothing else very clearly ; but, for want of archangels, one must like imperfect beings. It don't require to have lived half my time in order to be convinced of that ; else one should take an aversion to one's self. Thou'rt quite right in saying that gnats incommode more than elephants, and when we would perceive a gnat by its venom, we make it an elephant in our view. I assure thee, for example, that the person we have talked about, and on whom you vent cutting sarcasms, sharpened in the tail, as Montagne says, has told me five hundred times and more, in the course of my numberless vexations, among which are many miscalculations and falsifications—'Many worthy people are really interested about you ; the public even would be indignant at your grievances if you did not bear them well ; but you have only two hearts really devoted to you—the good Bailli and myself.'"

cru possible de te détacher de moi; depuis, j'ai cent fois vu qu'on a voué aux deux frères la haine la plus implacable; j'en ai bien ma part; Saillanette et du Saillant aussi. Va, crois-moi, une étrangère qui s'introduit dans une maison y fait naître la discorde et fait mettre en mouvement toutes les passions qui suivent la discorde. Du reste, n'en parlons plus."*

But let us now come to the most important figure by far in this group. Honoré Gabriel Mirabeau was endowed by nature with a quick and vigorous understanding, a lively imagination, passions more vehement than are almost ever seen in union with such intellectual powers, and a disposition by nature kindly and humane. His temperament led to the early unfolding both of his bodily and mental faculties; and there are few instances on record of children forming such manly ideas as he seems to have imbibed, even during his infancy. The peculiar circumstances in which, from his boyhood upwards, he was placed by the singular opinions, prejudices, and temper of his father, exercised a most powerful influence upon his whole conduct, and must have deeply affected his character in every material respect. Yet we may appreciate his merits and his faults, even through the artificial covering which was thus thrown over his nature; and although impetuosity of feelings, and a proportionate disregard of the obstacles which he ought to have respected instead of overleaping them, forms a pre-

* "The good Bailli! the good Bailli! Eh! by St. Polycarpe, my lord marquess and dearest elder brother, with whom wouldst that my worth should appear but with thee? The good Bailli! The person who said so has committed an act of fraud; the good Bailli knew this many a long day, and has said nothing; he perceived ever since 1750 that this person liked him not, and that thou wouldest have seen fast enough, had she believed it possible to detach thee from me. Since then I have seen a hundred times the most implacable hatred vowed to the two brothers: I have my share of it; Saillanette and Du Saillant theirs. Come! come! trust me, a stranger who gets into a family begets discord in it, and puts in motion all the passions which follow. However, let's say no more about it."

dominant feature of his mind and his habits, we cannot fairly charge him with any of those faults which go mainly to form the vicious disposition. Though forced first into estrangement from the society of his family, and afterwards into contempt of the parental authority, it yet must be admitted that originally he had strong filial affections, and no desire at all to set at defiance a control which he held peculiarly sacred; nor is it to be forgotten that, when his two parents quarrelled, he resisted all attempts of the one to make him side against the other,—even when the restoration of his own liberty might have been the reward of such an offensive alliance against their common oppressor. Nay, the veneration for his father, which he had early imbibed, never was extinguished by any persecution; for we find him to the last feeling, in fancy, the awe of an intellectual superiority, which certainly did not exist, and always refraining from retaliating the charges brought against himself for his indecorous life, by any allusion to the worse life of the Marquis.* The parsimonious treatment to which his comfort and respectability in the world was all his life sacrificed, and which his father chose to reconcile with a family pride almost without parallel, never made the son forget who and what he was, by descending to any act of meanness or dishonour; and, while pressed by want of the common necessaries of life, and tortured by the far more unbearable sight of those he most loved suffering the same privations, his exertions to relieve himself were always confined to the works of honest, though obscure, industry; nor has any one of his innumerable enemies, domestic, political, or personal, ever charged him with using, for the purpose of solicitation, that pen which was his only resource against want. The

* One work alone, which attacked the Marquis, is *said* to be his. But the evidence of authorship is very scanty, and it seems hardly fair, on such grounds, to charge him with so great a departure from his general line of conduct.

shifts and contrivances to which needy men, with strong passions, and in high stations, so often resort, and which would seem to justify in their case the uncharitable saying, that integrity and poverty are as hard to reconcile as it is for an empty sack to stand upright—have never been imputed to Mirabeau, at a time when his whole soul was engrossed by an overpowering passion, or his senses bewitched by a life of pleasure, or his resources brought to an ebb little above those of the menial or the peasant.

It would have been well if the influence of disorderly passions had not plunged him into other excesses no less blameable, though not, perhaps, at all dishonest or mercenary. It is not the connexion he formed with Madame le Monnier to which we refer, because for that, in its commencement, there were many excuses. A girl of eighteen married to a man of seventy-five, and only nominally married to this keeper, alternately confiding and jealous—now tempting her by indulgence and carelessness—now watching and restraining with tormenting and suspicious rigour—first awakened in Mirabeau's bosom the most irresistible of the passions, and all the more dangerous for so often assuming the garb, and even uniting itself with the reality, of virtuous propensities.[1] The elopement which followed, and was caused by a dislike on both their parts to play the hypocrite and live with him whom they were deceiving, proved altogether alien to the habits of French society, and severely outraged the feelings of those refined profligates who, reckoning vice itself nothing, hold indecorum to be the worst of enormities: in other words, prefer the semblance to the reality of virtue, and forgive one offence if another, the worser crime of falsehood, be added to veil it from public view.

Accordingly, there was an outcry raised throughout all society, not in France only, but in Europe, at the unheard-of atrocity. A young woman had left her

superannuated husband, whom she had, by the customs of aristocratic society, been compelled to take for her tyrant and tormentor, under the name of a husband, and had left him for one of an age nearer her own, and who sacrificed himself for her deliverance. The lovers had rebelled against those rules which regulated the vicious intercourse of nobles in legitimate France; they had outraged all the finer feelings of patrician nature, by refusing to lead a life of pretence and treachery, and secret indulgence; they had even brought into jeopardy the long-established security of illicit intercourse, understood without being avowed; and the veil was thus about to be torn away from all the endearing immoralities that give occupation and interest to noble life, and break the calm monotony of an existence which demands that it never shall be ruffled but by voluntary excitements, nor ever let alone while it can be tickled into enjoyment. Hence all society (that is, all the upper and worthless portion of it) combined "*to a woman*" against the hapless pair; Mirabeau was regarded as a monster; and the conduct of his father, who hunted him over all Europe, and then flung him into a prison for the best years of his life, was excused by all, and blamed by none; while no one ever thought of visiting the other party with the slightest censure—no one ever ventured to "hint a doubt, or hesitate dislike," of that very father turning his wife, the mother of his daughters, out of doors, and installing a mistress in her room.

The darker portion of Mirabeau's conduct relates to *Sophie*—not to Madame le Monnier. When, under that name, he dragged her before the public, and indulged a loose and prurient fancy, in pandering for the worst appetites of licentious minds, he became justly the object of aversion, and even of disgust; and ranged himself with the writers of obscene works, but took the precedence of these in profligacy, by making his own amours the theme of his abandoned contem-

plations.* It is the very worst passage in his history; and it is nearly the only one which admits neither defence nor palliation. The other grave charge to which he is exposed, of publishing the Berlin Correspondence, is, though on different grounds, alike without justification. In extenuation, it has been observed that the whole object of his existence depended upon the supplies which it furnished. His election in Provence would, without it, have been hopeless. But this is a sorry topic even of palliation.

But if all these and more vices, these and more fatal indiscretions, may be justly charged on Mirabeau, it is fit we ever should bear in mind the treatment which he constantly experienced from a parent whose heart had been alienated, and whose very reason had been perverted, by the arts of an intriguing woman. All the juvenile follies of the fiery young man are exaggerated; his conduct is condemned in the mass; if he does well he is charged with caprice; if he errs, it is his diabolical nature that accounts for it. He marries; the match proves an unhappy one. He is kept generally without a shilling of allowance, and expected to live like a noble Provençal. He makes love to Madame le Monnier, and elopes with her; he is denounced as a monster; cited before a court of provincial *justice* (as it was termed), and condemned to death in his absence. He flies; he is pursued by his father with inexorable severity, and beset with spies, and even bravoes. Nothing can be more terrible than the excesses of parental rage to which family pride and personal prejudice had wrought up the Marquis's feelings. In furious letters the violent passions of the old noble break out. The good Bailli tries long and

* The writings alluded to were the works of some of his hours of confinement during near four years of solitary imprisonment, and *may* have been afterwards used from necessity. If that was the cause of giving such shameful effusions publicity, we may well say that the offence of the composition, in such circumstances, disgusting as it was, merits the least grave portion of the blame.

long to mediate and to soften; but at length even he is forced to bend before the storm; and the correspondence of the brothers presents only letters and answers, almost alike violent and determined against him. At length the Marquis succeeds in seizing his son's person, and he is immured for forty-two months in the fortress of Vincennes; only, after a long interval, allowed books and pen and ink; and never suffered to correspond without his letters being read by the governor, whose affections, as usual, he entirely gained.

On his liberation he had a painful interview with Madame le Monnier—his Sophie—who had been supposed faithless, and he charged her with the offence; she defended her conduct, and recriminated upon her lover, who, it may be presumed, could not so easily repel the accusation. They parted in mutual displeasure, and the estrangement, unhappily, was eternal. She remained in the monastery where she had taken refuge, until her husband's death; and then continued in an adjoining house, having formed an intimate friendship with the sisters of the convent. An attachment grew up between herself and a most deserving man, but who, unhappily, before their intended marriage could take place, was seized with pulmonary consumption, and died in her arms, after her assiduous and affectionate attendance of many months by his sick couch. An aged and worthy physician and his wife had taken this ill-fated lady under their protection, and vainly endeavoured to console her. She had frequently before contemplated suicide, and always was resolved to seek refuge in it from her family's and her husband's persecutions. Some days before her last misfortune, an accidental death by the fumes of charcoal had happened in the neighbourhood, and drawn her attention to this mode of self-destruction. She had examined the particulars, and made inquiries of the physician as to the experiment and its conditions. With her wonted decision of mind she took

her resolution prospectively, and in the contemplation of her betrothed's death. With her wonted firmness of purpose she executed the resolve, and was found dead an hour after his decease, in her chamber, where she had placed a brasier of live charcoal, after closing the windows and the doors. Such are the facts respecting the end of this noble-minded and ill-fated woman; and they are attested by the evidence of the physician's family, of the nuns, and even of the inquiry judicially instituted by the local authorities. The mere date of the death, however, and the known courtship and intended marriage, are enough to convict of the most glaring falsehood those reports which soon after were spread by the implacable enemies of Mirabeau; and which, it is painful to think, found their way into works of great credit. Thus, one of the greatest historians of the Revolution says, that, on his liberation from Vincennes, he deserted Sophie, who put a period to her existence, — leaving it to be inferred that there was no quarrel: but that is comparatively immaterial, for the uncharitable may say he sought the quarrel to cover his intended desertion—the author leaves it also to be inferred, which is absolutely untrue, and indeed impossible, that her suicide was caused by Mirabeau's conduct.

The history of Mirabeau's private life, and his treatment by his family, forces upon the reader's mind one striking reflection upon the truly wretched state of society under the old *régime*. To the merciless Aristocracy which, under, perhaps we should rather say along with, the power of the Despot, swayed the country, Mirabeau was indebted for the ill-treatment, nay, the persecution, of his father. To the same cause, the Marchioness, his mother, was indebted for her ill-assorted marriage, first with a man old enough to be her father, while she was an infant, and next to a man she never was loved by; and to the same cause she owed the persecution she encountered when his

coldness had been turned into aversion. To the same cause, Madame le Monnier owed her forced marriage, when a girl, to a man old enough to be her great-grandfather, and the life of agony, rather than misery, she afterwards led. The powers of the Crown came in aid of Aristocratic pride and Aristocratic fury; and the State prison yawned to receive whatever victim was required by the demon of family pride or domestic tyranny,—aping, almost passing, the tyranny of the Crown. These are the blessings which the Revolution is charged with having torn from unhappy France! These are the glories, and this the felicity, of the old *régime!* These are the goods which the gods of legitimacy provide for their votaries! And to regain these joys it is, that some men would assist the Carlist handful of priests and nobles against the thirty millions of our free and dauntless neighbours—just as, to perpetuate the like glories of absolute Monarchy and pure Aristocracy elsewhere, the same politicians are knit in the bands of hearty friendship with all that is most bigoted and despotic in countries not yet visited by the irresistible wave of General Reform!

It will complete the view of Mirabeau's character, if we add that he joined to extraordinary talents, and a most brilliant fancy, powers of application rarely found in such association; that his vigorous reasoning, whether from some natural defect of judgment, or from the influence of feeling and passion, often proved an unsafe guide, even in speculation, still oftener in action; that, slave as he too generally proved to the love of indulgence, his courage was ever sustained above all suspicion; that even his share of a virtue far more rare, true fortitude under calamity, surpassed that of most men; and that all the hardships he had undergone, and the torments he had suffered from so many forms of ingenious persecution, never for a moment infused any gall into a disposition originally and throughout benevolent and kind.

Of his genius, the best monuments that remain are his Speeches, and even these were not always his own composition. Both Dumont, Duroveray, and Pellenc, men of distinguished ability, did more than assist him in their production; but some of the finest are known to have been his own; and the greatest passages, those which produced the most magical effect, were the inspiration of the moment. His literary works were too often produced under the pressure of want, to be well digested, or carefully finished. The chief of them, his 'Monarchie Prussienne,' is no doubt a vast collection of statistical facts; and, as he had access to the whole of the information which was possessed by the government upon the subject, it is impossible to say that he has not so used his materials as to produce a work of value. Yet the arrangement is not peculiarly felicitous; nor are the proofs on which the statements rest sifted with much care; while the dissertations, that plentifully garnish it, are often very prolix, and founded upon economical principles, which, though generally sound, being, indeed, those of the modern system, are applied, as it were by rote, to any case, and made the ground of decision, without the least regard to the limitations that must practically be introduced into the rules, or the exceptions that occur to their application. As for his intimate friend Major Mauvillon's share in this work, the subject of so many exaggerations, he has himself frankly admitted that it was altogether subordinate, although of great importance, nay essential, to the execution of the plan. The military details, especially, owe to his talents and experience their principal value. The 'Essai sur le Despotisme,' Mirabeau's earliest political production, is, though severely judged by his own criticism, a work of extraordinary merit; and the 'Considérations sur l'Agiotage,' and the essay on 'Lettres de Cachet,' may probably be esteemed his best tracts. But we are here speaking of those writings which partake not

of the oratorical character; for, to estimate his genius, we must look at the sudden and occasional productions of his pen, which resemble speeches more than books, and which, indeed, though never spoken, belong far more to the rhetorical than the literary or scientific class of writing. Among these the celebrated 'Réponse aux Protestations des Possédant Fiefs,' published in February, 1788, and written, as it were, off-hand, justly deserves the highest place; and it would be difficult to match it in the history of French eloquence.

Before closing these observations upon Mirabeau's merits as an author, it is fit to add that no man ever held the literary character higher, or comported himself more proudly in its investiture. He never but once published anything without his name; he never deemed that literary labour, for the purpose of just and honest gain, was other than a source of honour; he gloried in the name of author; and never was ashamed of his calling, of the labours which it imposed, or the privations which it entailed upon him. He has, in one striking passage of his very voluminous writings, expressed sentiments upon the importance of the Republic of Letters, and the feelings of literary men, so just and so useful for all to whom they apply, that it is proper to transcribe them, and give so wholesome a lesson more general circulation.

"Ah! s'ils se dévouaient loyalement au noble métier d'être utiles! Si leur indomptable amour-propre pouvait composer avec lui-même, et sacrifier la gloriole à la dignité! Si, au lieu de s'avilir, de s'entredéchirer, de détruire réciproquement leur influence, ils réunissaient leurs efforts et leurs travaux pour terrasser l'ambitieux qui usurpe, l'imposteur qui égare, le lâche qui se vend; si, méprisant le vil métier de gladiateurs littéraires, ils se croisaient en véritables frères d'armes contre les préjugés, le mensonge, le charlatanisme, la superstition, la tyrannie, de quelque genre

qu'elle soit, en moins d'un siècle la face de la terre serait changée!"*

Of the violent and precocious physical temperament of Mirabeau, mention has already been made. A slight notice of his personal appearance may not inappropriately close this imperfect sketch. His ugliness was so great as almost to become proverbial; and features, naturally harsh and even distorted, were rendered still more repulsive by the deep furrows of the confluent small-pox. His natural vanity, almost as exaggerated as his deformity, even drew from its excess the materials of gratification. "Personne" (he used to say) "ne connaît la puissance de ma laideur;"† and he was wont to speak of its "*sublimity*." The power of his eye, however, was undeniable, and the spirit and expression which his mind threw into all his countenance, made it, how plain soever, anything rather than uninteresting or disgusting. The arch reply of M. de Talleyrand is well known, as illustrative alike of Mirabeau's mental and bodily imperfections. He was dilating upon the qualities which must meet in whoever should aspire to govern France under a free constitution, and was enunciating, "Il faut qu'il soit éloquent—fougueux —noble"‡—and many other qualities notoriously possessed by himself—when the witty and wily statesman added, "Et qu'il soit tracé de la petite vérole, n'est-ce pas?"§

* "Ah! would they but devote themselves honestly to the noble art of being useful!—if their indomitable vanity could correspond with itself, and sacrifice fame to dignity!—if, instead of vilifying one another, and tearing one another in pieces, and mutually destroying their influence, they would combine their exertions and their labours to overthrow the ambitious who usurps, the impostor who deceives, the base who sells himself;—if, scorning the vile vocation of literary gladiators, they banded themselves like true brethren in arms against prejudice, falsehood, quackery, superstition, tyranny, of whatever description,—in less than a century the whole face of the earth would be changed!"

† "Nobody knows the power of my ugliness."

‡ "He must be eloquent—fiery—noble."

§ "And must not he be also marked with the small-pox?"

We have hitherto been dwelling upon the private history and the personal qualities of this celebrated individual, whose political history is intimately mixed up with the first stage of the French Revolution, and whose public character has been sketched by so fine a pen,* that humbler artists may well abandon the task in despair. But, before adding the few remarks required by this subject, one may be offered which the daughter of Neckar could less easily make. We may express the indignation with which every man of good feelings, and indeed of sound principles, must regard his attacks upon that venerable man. That he there suffered personal dislike to guide his pen and direct his conduct cannot be doubted. Nor can any one avoid agreeing with his candid and even favourable commentator, the amiable, and eloquent, and sensible Dumont, in his reprobation of the sudden turn which his course took when policy required a suspension of hostilities; and the quick transition from menaced and even boasted destruction to absolute neutrality—hardly to be exceeded by the scandalous scenes, so disgusting to all honourable minds, in later times enacted before our eyes, by certain politicians of the present day. Nothing can exceed the acrimony of Mirabeau towards Neckar, except the mild and dignified patience, approaching to indifference, of that excellent man, under the attack.

Although it is undeniable that his whole conduct in the scenes which made him with all France a politician, his spirit and his capacity—above all, his readiness, his fertility of resources and his brilliant eloquence—constantly appeared, and always produced with certainty their natural effect, of influencing the course of events in a marvellous degree; yet it may be fairly questioned if, in all that eventful history so made to try men's souls, one individual appeared whose conduct was

* Madame de Staël. 'Sur la Révolution Française.'

more under the interested impulse of merely selfish feelings, and guided by more exclusively personal calculations of interest. Living in times when even the coldest natures were kindled with patriotic zeal, and the most calculating were carried away into a forgetfulness of their own interests, he, whose nature was fiery, and whose conduct had been a tissue of indiscretions, seems to have always practised enthusiasm as a means towards an end, and to have made speculations for his own benefit—first in power, next in profit—the business of his public life. With all his warmth of eloquence, all his admirably acted passion, all his effective display of ready feeling, as each occasion required, it may be safely affirmed that Robespierre himself showed far more genuine zeal for the propagation of his principles, far more fanaticism in his devotion to popular rights, a far more unquenchable hatred of courts, and of every tyranny but his own.

Mirabeau contributed by his courage and his eloquence to the destruction of the old monarchy more than any one individual—more even than Neckar did by his weakness and his inconsistency. His was the first eloquence that emancipated France ever experienced. Admitted at length to assist in popular assemblies, addressed as the arbiters of the country's fate, called to perform their part by debating and hearing debates, it was by Mirabeau that the people were first made to feel the force of the orator, first taught what it was to hear spoken reason and spoken passion; and the silence of ages in those halls was first broken by the thunder of his voice echoing through the lofty vaults now covering multitudes of excited men. That his eloquence should in such circumstances pass for more than its value was inevitable; and that its power should be prodigious in proportion to the novelty of the occasion, was quite a matter of course. No one ever ruled assemblies, either of the people or of their representatives, with a more abso-

lute sway; none ever reaped an ampler harvest of popular sympathy and popular applause than he did when he broke up the public mind lying waste in France, and never till then touched or subdued by the rhetorician's art. But no sooner had he overthrown all the institutions of the monarchy than he entered into treaty with the court, to whose weakness his influence had become necessary as a restorative or a prop. It is possible, no doubt, that he may have felt the perils in which he had involved the country; but it is certain that the price of his assistance in rescuing her was stipulated with all the detail of the most sordid chaffering; and it is as undeniable that, had not death taken him from the stage at the moment of his greatest popularity, he must have stood or sunk before the world in a few weeks, as a traitor to the people, purchased with a price, and that price a large sum and a large income in the current coin of the realm.*

Nor was his first embarking in the revolutionary struggle the dictate of democratic principle, the result of any dream of equal liberty. A patrician by birth, aristocratic by nature, pampered by luxurious habits, —the vortex of popular contention and sweeping levelling change was no element for him to breathe in, nor was republican simplicity the natural hue and pattern of his artificial habits. But he had quarrelled with that order which alone he valued, and whose friendly intercourse alone he could bear: he found the circle of fashion shut against his vices, and, as Madame de Staël has not more wittily than correctly phrased it, he set fire to the edifice of society in order to force open the doors of the Paris drawing-rooms to himself. ("Il fallait mettre le feu à l'édifice social, pour que les portes des salons de Paris lui fussent ouvertes.")

It is another trait by the same masterly hand, and as just as the former, that, like other unprincipled

* The shameful contract, signed by both parties, Count d'Artois and Mirabeau himself, is preserved, and is printed in Lafayette's Memoirs.

men, he saw all along only his own interest in the affairs of his country, and his foresight was bounded by his selfishness. ("Comme tous les hommes sans morale, il vit d'abord son intérêt personnel dans la chose publique, et sa prévoyance fut bornée par son égoïsme.") The truth which this reflection discloses is of great account in contrasting the conduct of statesmen, as it is of the last importance in its relation to all public affairs. Nothing can more fetter the powers of the understanding than selfish and profligate principles; nothing more disqualify men for noble enterprise; nothing more obstruct, more contract the current of state affairs. The fatal influence of a bad disposition, of loose principles, of unworthy feelings, over the intellectual powers, is a topic of frequent use, not with the preacher so much as with the moral philosopher; because it is of a nature too refined for an ordinary audience. But it is an important chapter in psychology, as well as in ethics; and, unfortunately, the illustrations which it derives from facts are by no means confined to those which the secret manners of courts and the annals of absolute monarchy furnish to the student of history. Popular governments supply even more largely their quota of this contribution; because it is there chiefly that political genius can shine, and it is there that the sinister influence of bad principles interposes to obscure and to eclipse its rays. The habitual love of place; the aversion to serve the people without ruling over them; the repugnance to give up the station once possessed; to tear from the lips the intoxicating cup of power, when honour and duty commands that it shall pass—what dismal havoc has this made in the fairest prospects of usefulness and of fame—but also how mournfully has it marred the noblest features in the aspect of political genius! The visible face of public affairs, the page of parliamentary history in our own country, bears a sad testimony to this melancholy truth. But the mischief stops not

here. If we see so many instances of bright prospects clouded over when the gifts of the understanding have been displayed before the malignant influence of selfish interests obscured or perverted them—how many more cases must there be of a similar bias having prevented their ever being disclosed! Who can tell how much heavenly genius may lie buried under the mass of earth-born sordid influence—how often the genial current of the soul may have been frozen by base, calculating, selfish policy—or, in how many hearts pregnant with celestial fire the spark may have been extinguished ere yet it kindled into flame—extinguished by the cold and sordid propensity to seek office and to keep it, so epidemic among statesmen in modern times, and among all who aspire to be statesmen? Mirabeau was assuredly not one of these; but his genius had no sooner blazed forth in the first scenes of the Revolution, than it was cramped in all its aspirations by the baser materials which predominated in his extraordinarily mixed nature.

He did not nearly reach the ordinary term of the lives of statesmen, less nearly by six or seven years than Mr. Pitt, for he died at forty-two; but he lived in times when each week staggered under the load of events that had formerly made centuries to bend; and he thus lived long enough to show all that he could have attained if his life had been prolonged to the usual period. Had he perished a few weeks earlier, perhaps a few days, some doubt might have existed over the course which awaited him if he had survived; for his purchase by the court was but just completed when he died, and his eagerness to be bought had made him precipitately hurry on the completion of the bargain. Of one thing we cannot doubt, that in a few months, possibly weeks, he would have become hateful to the people whose idol he was at his death; and that his whole influence, his character for patriotism, his reputation for political courage, even the fame

of his talents, would have perished in attempting to earn the stipulated price, by vain efforts to stem the revolutionary torrent which he, more than any one, had let loose, and to save the court to whom he had sold himself after all but accomplishing its destruction. It is probable that he would have emigrated, and lived obscure and penniless abroad. It is next to certain that, had he remained in France, he would have been among the first victims of the Reign of Terror; and, the daring profligacy of his conduct offering an almost solitary instance of personal corruption among the errors and the crimes of the day, he would have left behind him a less enviable reputation, unless for cruelty, of which he had nothing, than even the worst of the men whose unprincipled but fanatical ambition soon after his decease deluged France in blood and convulsed all Europe in war.

CARNÔT.

It is impossible to find a greater contrast than the solid genius and severe virtue of Carnôt presents to all the qualities of that brilliant and worthless person whom we have just been contemplating.* Endowed with the greatest faculties of the understanding—cultivating these with the assiduity which to an ordinary capacity is of absolute necessity, but which an exalted one cannot despise if mighty deeds are to be done—exercising them through a long life upon the worthiest objects—despising all the outward accomplishments that dazzle the vulgar—never even addicting himself to the practice of those arts which enable the natural leaders of mankind to guide the multitude—and seeking only for the influence over other minds which was to be acquired by the actions that his own enabled him to perform—Carnôt offers to the admiration of posterity, as he did to his own times, a rare instance of the triumph of purely intellectual excellence, without one single adventitious aid, whether from station, or from wealth, or from the attraction of superficial or ornamental qualities, or from the happy accidents of fortune. We trace at every step his sterling worth producing its appropriate effect without external aid of any sort; to each successive eminence which he reached we see him raised by merit alone; in all his conflicts with adversity, with oppression, with difficulties of every sort and magnitude, almost with nature herself in some instances, we observe the struggle of intellec-

* Mirabeau.

tual superiority; and the commanding position which he thus took, he retained by the same means, nor to maintain it ever stooped a hair's breadth from the lofty attitude in which he had always climbed nor ever crawled.

This in any state of affairs is a prodigious merit—in one of change and uncertainty and revolution it is incomparably more rare and more to be admired; but it is not the highest claim to our respect which this great man prefers. His genius was exalted, and it was surpassed by his virtue. An absolute self-denial in all the particulars where human passions bear most sway over ordinary minds; an immovable fortitude in all those situations in which human weakness is most apt to yield; a courage of every kind, from the highest to the most vulgar, from the courage of the statesman to that of the grenadier; the active valour of braving danger, and the calmness which can command every faculty of the soul in the midst of extreme perils; an entire devotion to the maintenance of his principles at any personal sacrifices and at all hazards; an enthusiastic zeal for the service of his country and his kind; all embellished by a modesty which made the glory of his exertions alone feel cumbrous to him—these rare qualities seemed to revive the old Roman for the admiration, if not for the imitation and improvement of a degenerate age—but to these was added a tenderness of disposition which the old Roman either strove to stifle within him, or to which his nature was alien and strange.

The modesty which has just been remarked as a distinguishing feature of his character, and his carelessness about the opinion entertained of his conduct, provided he acted so as to satisfy his own conscience according to his own sense of duty, have conspired to give him a very different place in the estimation of the world at large from that which belongs to him of right —making his genius be undervalued and his moral

worth misconceived. Some details become therefore necessary upon both these points.

His aptitude and his taste for military affairs, destined afterwards to perform so important a part in the history of Europe, displayed itself in a singular manner while yet a child. Being taken for the first time to a theatre where some siege or other warlike operation was represented, he astonished the audience by interrupting the piece to complain of the manner in which the general had disposed his men and his guns, crying out to him that his men were in fire, and loudly calling upon him to change his position. In fact the men were so placed as to be commanded by a battery. The mathematical sciences absorbed his whole attention for some years; and his celebrated Theorem on the Measure of Lost Forces, published early in life, shows with what success his studies were pursued. But his reading was general; his feelings were ever alive to the duties of a man and a citizen; his enthusiasm was kindled by nothing so much as by the records of benevolent and patriotic actions. That eloquence, the result of strong feelings and a correct taste, would have been his in no common measure had he studied words as much as things, we have the strongest proof in the success of his first production, the 'Eloge de Vauban,' crowned by the Academy of Dijon, and from which a passage of singular beauty, admirably characteristic of the writer, may be cited:—"C'était un de ces hommes que la nature a donné au monde tout formés à la bienfaisance; doués, comme l'abeille, d'une activité innée pour le bien général; qui ne peuvent séparer leur sort de celui de la république, et qui, membres intimes de la société, vivent, prospèrent, souffrent, et languissent avec elle."*

* "He was one of those men whom Nature has given to the world ready made for doing good; gifted like the bee with an innate activity for the general good; who never can separate their own lot from that of the commonwealth; and who, members of society intimately connected with it, live, prosper, suffer, and languish only with it."

His habitual courage was displayed on this occasion; the panegyric boldly bestowed by him on Montalembert gave inexpressible offence, and caused him to be confined in Vincennes under a lettre de cachet; one of the causes probably of the hatred which he so steadily showed to arbitrary power.

But scenes now approached which were destined to suspend his scientific pursuits, and to rouse his political energies. He saw the earlier portion of the Revolution unmoved; but he was the first military man who joined it, having then the rank of Lieutenant of Engineers; and he was elected as deputy for St. Omer to the Legislative Assembly; and afterwards by the Pas de Calais to the Convention. He sat in judgment on the King, and voted for his death; but his absence on a military commission prevented him from taking any part in the highly reprehensible proceedings which led to the trial. Of these he loudly disapproved; but when the whole had been fixed, he considered himself as in the position of a judge called upon to determine a question already prepared, brought before him ripe for decision, and in which he had no choice but to deliver his opinion, whatever that might be.

In April, 1793, was formed the celebrated Committee of Public Safety, as it is inaccurately termed, but really of Public Salvation; that body which has filled the world with the renown of its great actions, the terror of its name, and the infamy of its crimes.* The

* It is only justice to observe, that, as the guilty are generally made answerable for more than they have perpetrated, so this body has been incorrectly supposed to have done much that was really the work of others. It never possessed any other function but that of putting persons on their trial; and the Court, it could hardly be called of justice, the Revolutionary Tribunal, was altogether the creation and generally the creature of the Convention. But even that hateful tribunal, far worse than the Committee, acquitted many more than it condemned; and as each cause was defended, so it is well known that no advocate ever suffered for the freedom of his defence. It is far from being the design of this note to lessen the execration justly felt of those crimes which covered the French name with disgrace, which paved the way for the subjugation of the

country was then threatened with invasion from every point; a march upon Paris was the avowed object of the allies; insurrections were plotting, aided by foreigners in every part of France; one great province was in open rebellion; Paris abounded in parties resolved on destroying the revolutionary and restoring the ancient Government—when a general sense of the absolute necessity for a vigorous, concentrated, united executive power to control disaffection, and apply the national force in defence of the State, both against foreign and domestic enemies, gave birth to the famous Committee, which immediately proceeded to rule with a sceptre of iron, and to war with the sword of millions. Of this Committee, Carnôt, then only a Lieutenant of Engineers, was named a member, after it had existed for eight months; and, as it was immediately found wholly impossible to pursue the plan first laid down for its operations, of discussing fully each act to be done and then deciding upon it by a majority of voices, a division was made of the labours, and a distribution of the members in departments, each being alone the ruler of his own province, and alone held responsible for its measures, although a certain number of signatures was required to give the acts of each validity. The whole department of war, as well the organization of the military force as its operations in the field, was assigned to Carnôt. Others, as Robert Lindet, and Prieur de la Côte d'Or, were appointed to superintend the Commissariat and Armament departments; but those whom the world has most heard of,

Republic, which facilitated the extinction of public liberty, and indeed ended in the conquest of France. But it was observed by a sagacious and philosophical person, well acquainted with the history of his country, and to whose suggestions this sketch is greatly indebted, that the remarks in the text seemed, if unqualified, to sanction the common opinion entertained in foreign countries, which confounds together the Committee and the Revolutionary Tribunal, and casts upon the former body all that was done by the Convention and the Clubs; and in consequence of his remark this note is added.

most dreaded, and most justly execrated, were the five to whom was given up the superintendence of the Police—Robespierre, Couthon, Billaud Varennes, St. Just, and Collôt d'Herbois—all of whom, except St. Just, a young man of an enthusiastic temperament, and, until corrupted by absolute power, of a virtuous disposition, were regarded in their own day, and will be loathed by succeeding ages, as among the greatest monsters that ever disgraced the human name.* The annals of ancient tyrants alone present scenes of darker atrocity than the Reign of Terror; for the massacres by the Bourbons on the Eve of St. Bartholomew, and by the Irish Papists in 1641, though more prodigal of blood, were a momentary ebullition of religious fury, and not, like those of the guillotine, deliberately perpetrated with the mockery of justice, under her outraged form, and in her profaned name.

In these horrid scenes the enemies of Carnôt have, of course, endeavoured to implicate him; and it is not to be denied that many impartial observers have formed an opinion condemnatory of his conduct—which in discussing this question, he readily admitted to be the unavoidable impression of those who had not thoroughly considered the subject. That he remained in office with such detestable men as his colleagues; that he was aware of all their proceedings; that he even signed the orders of execution in his turn, complying with the regulation already mentioned; that he thus made himself legally responsible for all those atrocious acts of an absolute power cruelly exercised—is not to be questioned, and no one can venture to hold with entire confidence the opinion that this responsibility did not extend much farther, and involve him in the actual and enormous guilt of deeds which, at all events, and from whatever motive, he sanctioned by his participation, leaving mankind to infer, from his

* Carnôt himself, admitting always Robespierre to have been exceedingly bad, said there were two a good deal worse, Billaud and Collôt.

silence, that they had his approval. Yet his position, and that of his country, must be well considered before we pass so severe a censure upon his conduct. He began to administer the war department, had made some progress in his functions, and had gained brilliant successes, before his colleagues commenced their reign of terror. His defence is, that, had he yielded to the natural feelings of abhorrence, and followed his own inclinations, the country was conquered, possibly partitioned—far worse injury inflicted upon his fellow-citizens—far more blood spilt—far more lasting disgrace incurred by the nation—far more permanent disasters entailed upon all classes of the people—than all that the Terrorist executions and confiscations could produce. Had he any right, then, to refuse his aid, thus required for averting such calamities? Was it not enough for him to know that his retirement would certainly not have stayed the proscription, while it most probably would have opened the gates of Paris to the Allies? Was it not sufficient for his conscience that he felt wholly innocent of the crimes perpetrated by his colleagues? And, knowing his character to be above reproach, had he a right to sacrifice his country to a regard for his reputation? This question he could answer in those memorable words of Danton—"*Périsse ma réputation plutôt que ma patrie!*"*

But it may be urged that such passages, such elections, are of dangerous example, *decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile;*† and also, that the defence assumes the fact, both of his having constantly disapproved of the proceedings of Terror, and of his having adhered to the government of the Terrorists from no sinister motive. To the first objection it would not be easy to return a satisfactory answer, unless by urging the extremity of the case in which he was called upon to make his election, and the prodigious magnitude of the evils be-

* "Perish rather my reputation than my country."

† The example is deceptious which may be imitated by vices.

tween which he had to choose. Nor will any one be convinced by such considerations who is inclined to hold that, in questions of blood-guiltiness, we are forbidden to regard any consequences, and bound to keep each his own hands at all events pure. It may, however, be well to reflect, that many persons are parties to crimes, such as the waging of unjust and murderous wars, nay, even to the oppression and ruin of individuals by measures of state, and yet escape censure, upon no other ground than that they confine their exertions to their own department, leaving the whole blame to rest upon the guilty actors; and if it should be said that Carnôt's withdrawing his sanction from the proscriptions might have arrested the course of his bloodthirsty colleagues, it is at the least equally sure that, if all who disapproved of an unjust war refused to play their parts in it—if generals and officers and soldiers withheld their concurrence—no statesman, be he ever so wicked or ever so powerful, could cover the face of the earth with the slaughter and fire and pillage of warfare.

But the other question, the question of fact, is easily and satisfactorily answered; for we are possessed of evidence which acquits him of all participation in the crimes of the day, and also of circumstances in his history which serve as a test of his motives in continuing to direct the military operations while Robespierre presided over the internal policy of the State. The arrangement of the Committee in departments to which reference has been made, is established in the written protest previously drawn up by Robert Lindet for his own exculpation. Carnôt's name being affixed without any knowledge even of the lists, and as a mere form, seems proved by the accidental circumstance of his having signed the warrant for the arrest of his confidential secretary, this happening to be issued by Robespierre in the week when it was Carnôt's turn to sign. On some occasions he assisted

at the police sittings of the Committee, and then he is represented by the Royalist authors themselves as having "saved more lives than all that his colleagues sacrificed." The hatred of his colleagues and their constant threats of vengeance are well known. It was his keeping aloof from all participation in the bloody orgies of their councils; his openly reprobating their proceedings; his fearlessly blaming the destruction of the Brissotins in particular; that made the fanatical St. Just charge him with Moderantism, and insist upon his being tried for the offence; that made Robespierre, in lamenting the necessity of having him among their number as the consequence of his own ignorance of military affairs, call him, with unspeakable bitterness of spirit, "L'odieux Carnôt." Nay, Robespierre's answer to the constant requisitions made for his destruction was in these words:—"Dans ce moment l'on ne pourrait pas se passer de lui; mais attendez jusqu'à ce qu'il ne nous soit plus indispensable, ou bien iusque nos armées subissent quelque revers—et alors sa tête tombera; je vous en réponds."*

It is fair, too, that we should regard the rest of his conduct, in order to have a test of the purity of his motives in this greatest exigency. Not only he always set himself against anything like party or the acquisition of personal influence; not only did he constantly refuse, and at the daily risk of his life, even to enter the door of the Jacobins or any other Club; but we know that his courage was displayed in nobly doing his duty, utterly careless of consequences, where these could only affect himself. In June, 1792, he exposed himself to the furious resentment of the army by declaring in his report the massacre of Dillon and Beau-

* "For the present we cannot possibly do without him; but wait only until he shall no longer be indispensable, or until our armies shall meet with some reverse—and then his head shall fall, I promise you."—[Robespierre's words, as repeated by General Carnôt himself to the writer of these pages, in 1814.]

geand to be the "acts of Cannibals." As often as any matter was referred to his investigation, his reports were made without the least regard to their either displeasing the people, injuring the progress of his principles, or exasperating the Government against him; and when he received orders, though in a subordinate capacity, to do anything of which he strongly disapproved, he fearlessly encountered the risk of his head by a peremptory refusal: as when he refused to arrest an unpopular general, while acting as Deputy with the Army of the North. He who could cite such acts of moral courage, as performed in such times, might well challenge credit for being influenced by no sense of personal danger, or any other unworthy motive, in adhering to the Terrorists while their power was at its height.

It is worthy of remark how entirely those who most condemn Carnôt for the compliances now under discussion have forgotten the conduct of others who have sanctioned as great crimes without any portion of his excuse. No one more loudly blamed him, for example, than Talleyrand, and yet Talleyrand continued the principal minister, not only of Napoleon, during his Spanish, Swiss, and Russian wars,* but of the

* The comparison of these wars to the judicial murders of Paris may seem unjust toward the former. But, although the glory of war encircles its horrible atrocities with a false glare which deceives us as to its blood-guiltiness, in what does the crime of Napoleon, when he sacrificed thousands of lives to his lust of foreign conquest, differ from that of Robespierre when he sought domestic power by slaying hundreds of his fellow-citizens? In one particular there is more atrocity in the crimes of the latter; they were perpetrated under the name and form of justice, whose sanctity they cruelly profaned; but, on the other hand, far more blood was spilt, far more wide-spreading and lengthened misery occasioned to unoffending provinces, by the invasions of Spain, and Switzerland, and Russia, than by all the acts of the Committee, the Convention, and the Revolutionary Tribunal. Nor will mankind ever be free from the scourge of war until they learn to call things by their proper names, to give crimes the same epithets, whatever outward form they may assume, and to regard with equal abhorrence the conqueror who slakes his thirst of dominion with the blood of his fellow-creatures, and the more vulgar criminal, who is executed for taking the life of a wayfaring man that he may seize upon his purse.

Executive Directory, during the proscription of Fructidor, when sixty-three Deputies and thirteen Journalists were arrested in their beds, carried through the provinces in cages like wild beasts amidst the revilings of the infuriated mob, and crowded into the hold of a convict-ship to perish miserably in the swamps of Guiana.*

In these reflections no reference has been made to the personal character of Carnôt, his unsullied purity in all the relations of private life, and the incorruptible integrity of his public administration, as far as money was concerned. The reason of this omission is obvious. Although the private reputation of some Terrorists was almost as much tarnished as their public conduct, it is certain that others, perhaps the greater number, and among them certainly Robespierre, were of irreproachable lives. As to corruption, it was imputable to few or none of them;† indeed the generally-received phrase was that they had all vices saving this. The men who had, unwatched, the distribution of the whole revenues of France, distributed among themselves monthly the sum of 360 francs for all their expenses;

* It deserves to be remarked that the virtuous Lafayette, whose memoirs and correspondence have been given to the world by his family, although he often makes mention of Carnôt, and held in more abhorrence than perhaps any other man the whole Reign of Terror, his hatred of which was indeed the cause of all his own misfortunes, yet never speaks disparagingly of the great Minister: on the contrary, whenever he can find an opportunity, his tone is apologetic; and in one passage particularly, he expressly says that the Committee of Public Safety only had the use of his name, not the disposal of his person.—(See tome iv. pp. 334, 355; and v. pp. 110, 217.)

† Danton was not a member of the Committee of Public Safety. He was supposed to have been sold to the Court. The terms of the bargain have even been stated, and Montmorin (whose execution he caused) is reported to have had his receipt for the money; but the evidence of these charges is more than doubtful, and the best authorities have rejected it. It must, however, be stated that the high republican party, all the adherents of Robespierre, believed in Danton's corruption, and charged him with embezzlement of the funds entrusted to him when sent on missions, as well as with malversation and extortions in the provinces.—(*Dict. Ency. la France*, Ph. Liby. tom. vi.)

and when Robespierre was put to death the whole property found in his possession was thirty-six of the last supply thus issued to him.* Carnôt, in like manner, never received a farthing of the public money for his official services. But, in another respect also, his singular disinterestedness was truly striking: it was peculiar to himself, and it proved to demonstration how entirely every selfish feeling was absorbed in his zeal for the public service. Though at the head of all military affairs, he never received his own promotion in the army more rapidly than the most friendless subaltern. He was only a lieutenant when he came into office. He was but a captain while directing the operations of fourteen armies, and bestowing all ranks, all commands, upon his brother officers. It was not till the latter part of his Directorship that he became colonel, and he remained colonel only while sovereign of the country. These passages may well be cited as throwing a strong light upon the purity of his motives, when his conduct is equivocal, and when the fact is referable to either good motives or bad. They seem quite enough to prove that when he went wrong the error was one of the judgment, and not of the heart.

But, if a considerable difference of opinion exists, and ever will divide men's minds, upon the moral character of Carnôt, upon his genius for affairs there can be no dispute at all. The crisis was truly appalling when he undertook the military administration of the Republic. The remains of Dumourier's army were chased from post to post; Valenciennes, Mentz, Condé, had fallen; two Spanish armies attacked the line of the Pyrenees: another invasion was advancing from Piedmont on that of the Alps; La Vendée was

* These simple republicans divided their monthly allowances into rouleaux of 12f., being their daily expenditure; and three of these, unexpended, were found in Robespierre's desk. He died in debt to Dupley, with whom he boarded.

in the hands of the rebels, who threatened the capital itself of the province to the number of 40,000 armed peasanty, of all troops the most formidable in such a country; Marseilles and Lyons had separated themselves by force from the Republican government; and an English fleet rode in the harbour of Toulon. Every one knows how swiftly this scene was reversed, the enemy on all points driven back, offensive operations resumed, the neighbouring countries subjugated, and the terrible Republic installed as the Conqueror of Europe, instead of expecting her fate at the hands of a hundred foes. In less than a year and a-half of this unparalleled administration, the brilliant results of the campaign were 27 victories, 8 of them in pitched battles; 120 successful actions of lesser moment; 116 regular fortresses or great towns taken, 36 of them after regular sieges, and 230 lesser forts carried; 80,000 of the enemy slain, 91,000 made prisoners, 3,800 cannon, 70,000 muskets, and 90 colours captured. These marvels are known to the world, and on these the splendid fame of this great man rests. But it is not so well known that he conducted alone the whole correspondence of fourteen armies; that wherever he could not repose absolute confidence in his General, he gave his detailed instructions from Paris; that from time to time he repaired to the spot and saw that his orders were followed, or informed himself how they should be modified, sometimes making the circuit of five or six armies during one tour of inspection; and that, where the fortune of a battle was that of the nation, as at Wattignies, and his taking the field in person could turn the fate of the day, he put himself, in his civic dress, at the head of the troops; and, after performing prodigies of valour, gained a decisive victory, and saved the Capital itself. In the whole history of war and of administration there is perhaps no second instance of anything like his instructions to Pichegru for the campaign of 1794.

Hardly a battle was fought, or a place masked, or a siege formed, or a corps posted, that these orders did not previously designate and arrange; nor does the narrative of that victorious campaign differ from the previous orders for conducting it, except in the tense of the verbs employed, and in the filling up a few names of the more obscure places, or of the less important affairs.

It remains to apply the severest and the surest of all tests to his brilliant career,—the value of the men whom he promoted, and by whom he was served. Hoche's merit he at once discovered while a sergeant of foot, from a plan of operations which he had given in. Buonaparte himself was placed by him at the head of the great Army of Italy, while wholly unknown by any achievement, except by the genius which he showed at Paris in his dispositions for fighting the Battle of the Sections. He was then a young man of five-and-twenty, and had never shown any talent in regular war except on a very small scale at the siege of Toulon. Carnôt, without any hesitation, after observing his conduct at Paris, gave him the chief command of the Republic's most important and difficult campaign, against the whole force of Austria and Italy. It might suit the Emperor's views afterwards to forget the obligation which he owed, and to seek a poor justification of his ingratitude in attempting to undervalue his patron, of whose military administration he often spoke slightingly to his courtiers. But a letter now lies before me, dated 10 Floreal, An 4 (June, 1796), from his head-quarters at Cherasco, after the battles of Lodi and Arcola, in which he tells Carnôt, then Director, and again at the head of the War Department, that the treaty with Sardinia enables him to receive communications through Turin in half the time of the longer route, and adds, "Je pourrais donc recevoir promptement vos ordres et connaître vos intentions

pour la direction à donner à l'armée;"* and in a former letter to the Finance Minister he had said, "that with the command of the army he had received a plan of offensive war prescribed to him, and the execution of which required prompt measures and extraordinary funds." A despatch of Carnôt's is also before me of a somewhat earlier date, chalking out generally the plan of operations; generally, no doubt; for the Great Director well knew when to tie down his instruments by special instructions, and when to leave a large latitude to those who deserved and obtained his entire confidence.

It is unnecessary to add that the other generals, at the same time employed to carry the French flag in triumph over Europe, were also men of first-rate military capacity—Masséna, Joubert, Lannes, Moreau. Nor ought we to forget that the resources of all other sciences were brought by the War Minister to bear upon the military art; that by him chemistry, geodesy, mechanics, aërostation itself, were laid under contribution for the benefit of the tactician; that, above all, the foundations were laid of that magnificent system of Public Education so invaluable for all the departments of the state, the Polytechnic School, one of the most glorious monuments of the spirit of improvement that have survived the changes of both Revolution and Restoration.

When Carnôt quitted the Committee of Public Safety in the latter part of 1794, the confidence of his countrymen was signally manifested towards him. No fewer than fourteen places chose him at once for their representative in the Council of Five Hundred. In 1795 he accepted the place of Director and the Administration of the War Department, at a moment of almost as great public disaster as when he first came

* "I shall therefore be able to receive promptly your orders, and to know your intentions respecting the direction you would have given to the army."

into the executive government two years before. Had any selfish feeling ever found a place in his bosom,—above all, had personal vanity been its inmate,—he would have held aloof at this crisis of affairs, left the new constitution to work its way, and let the world believe that, as disaster had succeeded to victory when he quitted the government, so all the military glory of France was bound up in his ministry. But he scorned all personal feelings; he knew only the motives of a statesman, harboured only the sentiments of a patriot, acknowledged only the claims of his country. At once he obeyed her summons, and in a few weeks victory again resorted to her standard.

So brilliant a career was destined to a premature close. It is believed by most observers, that at every period of the Revolution the great majority of the French people, except in the capital, were adverse to republican principles;* and the elections of 1797, the first that were held under the new constitution, returned a majority of Royalists and moderate Reformers to the Councils. The first acts of the new representatives showed for what they were prepared. In the person of Pichegru, a noted Royalist was elected President of the Five Hundred; and counter-revolutionary propositions were openly discussed in that assembly. The majority of the Directory formed their determination with promptitude; and resolved upon an act of violence (*coup d'état*) for which they found a precedent

* The saying of Barrère is well known: "Il y a une république—il n'y a pas de républicains." Soulavie, formerly a member of the Gironde, boasted that his party, on the 10th of August, accomplished what was plainly "against the wishes of the country," *i.e.* the destruction of monarchy, "with 3,000 workmen." Pétion declared that at that time there were only five republicans in all France. Collot d'Herbois and Merlin de Thionville, in an altercation with him, said, "Nous avons fait le dix d'Août sans vous, et nous allons faire la république contre vous." Nay, as late as 3d July, 1791, we find Merlin (Douay) himself speaking of the abolition of royalty with horror, as the synonyme of "une guerre civile affreuse," and arguing on the utter impossibility of forming a republic in an extensive country.—(*Mém. de Lafayette*, iii. 383. *Lettre de Merlin.*)

in the history of Oliver Cromwell, who had purged the Parliament of all doubtful members by a military force stationed at the door. To this proposition Carnôt, however he might lament the unfavourable aspect of the majority in the new Councils, steadily refused his consent. As soon as he was aware of the intentions of his colleagues, he might have secured himself and destroyed them by at once denouncing their plot to those bodies. But he was far above all acts that even wore the semblance of treachery; and he became the sacrifice to his unchangeable integrity. Proscribed with the party which he most disliked, and proscribed because he would not join in breaking the law to reach them and to destroy them, he narrowly escaped alive, and he led the life of an exile from the country he had twice saved, until, after some years of disgrace, distraction, and defeat, the never-failing consequences of his quitting office, he was recalled by the revolution which destroyed the Directorial power, and placed Napoleon upon the Consular throne.

In that retirement his favourite science was his constant resource. His mathematical studies, never wholly abandoned, were resumed with all the zeal of his younger years, and the fruit of these worthy occupations was the composition of those works which give him so high a place among mathematicians. Even in an age when analytical methods have eclipsed the more beautiful, though far less powerful, investigations of geometry, his *Géometrie de la Position* is justly admired for the singular elegance and unexpected generality of the theorems,* as well as the acuteness of many of its general doctrines.† His treatise on the Principles of the different departments of the Calculus is a masterly work, alike admirable for its clearness, its profound sagacity, and its happy illustrations. Nor can any writer be named who has so well described

* Chap. VI. † Disc. Prélim.

and explained the Calculus of Variations as he has done in that work. In these sublime researches this great patriot sought consolation amidst the misfortunes which the incapacity and the profligacy of his former colleagues, Barras, Rewbel, and Lepaux, were daily bringing upon France; as far as any occupation that left him the power of reflecting upon passing events could yield him comfort, while he saw the fruits of his labours, the trophies which his victories had gained for his country, ravished from her—her independence once more threatened by foreign enemies—her bosom torn with intestine distractions—her territory desolated by the projects of counter-revolution.

From the return of Napoleon he expected the termination of those calamities, and, with all the friends of liberty, he hailed the elevation of the Consul to power with patriotic delight. Under him he resumed his functions as War Minister, but resigned them the moment he perceived that the Consul harboured projects hostile to public liberty. His republican attachments were recorded in his votes against the Consulship for Life and the Imperial title. He remained in a private state, devoted to scientific pursuits, until Napoleon's reverses and those of France seemed to call for all the help she could receive from every good citizen; and he then wrote that memorable letter, which, in a few simple words, expressed at once his devotion to his country, and his adherence to the principles of freedom. The concluding sentence is remarkable. After making a tender of his military services in modest terms, he adds—"Il est encore tems pour vous, Sire, de conquérir une paix glorieuse et de faire que l'amour du grand peuple vous soit rendu."* The offer was at once accepted, and he was sent to defend Antwerp, where his military genius

* "There is still time, Sire, for conquering a glorious peace, and making the love of a great people be again restored to you."

shone conspicuous, but was eclipsed by his tender care of the inhabitants; and they addressed to him, on his departure, a wish, at once simple and affecting, to possess in their great church some memorial of a governor so much respected and so dearly loved.

The last words that Napoleon addressed to him when he left Paris after the battle of Waterloo are remarkable, and they carry a memorable lesson to shortsighted, ambitious, and unprincipled men.—"*Carnôt, je vous ai connu trop tard!*"* Truly tyrants, and they who would play the tyrant's part, are the last to make acquaintance with the worth of such men as Carnôt. Far sweeter to their ear is the accent of flattery, the soft tone of assent and obeisance, than the stern, grating, hoarse, sound of the independent voice, the honest and natural strains that convey wholesome truth, and threaten manly resistance to wicked schemes. Had the virtue of Washington found any place in Napoleon's bosom, the first man clasped to it would have been the inflexible republican, the indomitable patriot, the untameable lover of freedom, who regarded all his own glories, all his triumphs over the enemy, as nothing, unless they subdued the foes of liberty and of France. But he who only valued his victories as a ladder to the throne—who made no account of his laurels unless as they covered the fruit, the forbidden fruit, of arbitrary power—only followed the bent of his evil nature, in driving far from him an eye he durst not meet, a look which reproached him, and an arm whose vengeance conscience told him he deserved to encounter. The stuff of which he would make his courtiers was far different from Carnôt's. His palace-gates flew open to the congenial spirits of the courtly parasites, whom, be it spoken with respect as with shame, the National Institute contained within its body, who, by an unani-

* "Carnôt! I have known you too late!"

mous vote,* as disgraceful as ever proceeded from even literary servility, erased Carnôt's name from their lists, when he was persecuted for refusing to violate the constitution, and with one voice elected Buonaparte in his stead.

The Restoration, which was only consummated in 1815 after the second occupation of Paris, drove this illustrious statesman and warrior a second time, and for the rest of his days, into exile—an exile far more honourable than any Court favour, because it might have been averted by the suppleness and the time-serving so dear to Princes, the abandonment of long-cherished principles, the sacrifice of deep-rooted opinions; those compliances, and that apostacy, which

* It is fair here to note that there was a colour at least of law for Carnôt's exclusion; because the Directory had passed a decree or forced it upon the legislature truncated by the act of violence just committed,—and that decree declared all the persons proscribed to have forfeited their civil rights. Nevertheless, to regard such a mockery of law as binding on the Institute was unpardonable; and, at any rate, no human power could have obliged that body to fill up the vacancy, which it did by an unanimous and an immediate vote. In 1814 an attempt was made once more to exclude Carnôt at the Restoration. M. Arago, then a very young man (only 26 years old), and by much the youngest member of the Institute, declared that he should resist by every means in his power the filling up such a vacancy, and thus prevented the Crown from insisting upon Carnôt's exclusion. When this was, during the *cent jours*, told to Napoleon by the General himself, he was much struck with it, expressed himself in terms of great admiration, probably reflected somewhat painfully upon his own very different conduct in consenting to be the successor of his patron 17 years before; but had the magnanimity nevertheless to bestow upon M. Arago the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour.—The excellent and learned Niebuhr has recorded his admiration of Carnôt in striking language: "He is in some points the greatest man of this century. His virtue is of an exalted kind. When he invents a new system of tactics, hastens to the army, teaches it how to conquer by means of them, and then returns to his government at Paris, he appears great indeed! While engaged in making plans for the operations of five armies, he wrote a mathematical work of the highest character, and composed very agreeable little poems. He was a mighty genius! However I may differ from his political views, there is a republican greatness in him which commands respect. My love for him may be an anomaly; yet so it is. Had I nothing left in the wide world but a crust of bread, I should be proud of sharing it with Carnôt."

are more soothing to the Royal taste, in proportion as they more tarnish the character, and are never so much relished as when the name is the most famous which they dishonour. Yet let it never be forgotten that Princes are nurtured in falsehood by the atmosphere of lies which envelops their palace; steeled against natural sympathies by the selfish natures of all that surround them; hardened in cruelty, partly indeed by the fears incident to their position, but partly too by the unfeeling creatures, the factitious, the unnatural productions of a Court, whom alone they deal with; trained for tyrants by the prostration which they find in all the minds they come in contact with; encouraged to domineer by the unresisting medium through which all their steps to power and its abuse are made. It is not more true that the vulture is hatched by the parent bird from her egg in her bloodstained nest, than that the parasite courtier in the palace is the legitimate father of the tyrant.

Let not the page that records such deeds, such virtues, and such sacrifices as Carnôt's, and places in contrast with them the perfidy and the ingratitude which rewarded them, be read only as the amusement of a vacant hour, or to gratify the vulgar curiosity raised by a celebrated name. That page is fitted to convey a great moral lesson both to the potentates who vex mankind, and to the world whose weakness and whose baseness both perverts their nature to mischief, and arms it with the power of doing harm. While the tyrant is justly loathed—while rational men shall never cease to repeat the descriptive words, "Non ullum monstrum nec fœdius, nec tetrius, neque dîs hominibusque magis invisum terra genuit; qui quamquam formâ hominis, tamen immanitate morum vastissimas vincit belluas"*—while no excuse nor any

* Cic. de Republicâ.—"No monster, either more loathsome, or more hideous, or more hateful to gods and men, did this earth ever produce; whose form, indeed, is human, yet in savageness of habits does he surpass the wildest beasts."

palliation for his crimes can ever be admitted from any consideration of other men's follies or vices—yet is it at the same time just, and it is also useful, to bear perpetually in mind how impracticable would be all the schemes of despots, if the people were not the willing accomplices in their own subjugation. Well indeed might Napoleon hope to enslave France on his return, more easily than he ever hoped to conquer Egypt, when he observed that, before he fared forth upon his adventurous expedition to the East, the greatest men whom science enrolled among her votaries were capable of the baseness which expelled from their Academy one of its most brilliant members, only because to a scientific renown equal with their own he added the imperishable glory of being a martyr to the cause of law and justice! Well might the victorious soldier regard France as a country fated to be ruled with an iron rod, when he saw the whole people quail before three corrupt tyrants, and drive from their soil the illustrious patriot whose genius and whose valour had twice saved it from a foreign yoke! Well might the Bourbons, whom Napoleon's mad ambition had replaced on the throne, verify the saying, that the worst of Revolutions is a Restoration, when the French people suffered them without a murmur to proscribe the author of all those victories which had made them famous throughout the world, leaving to die, in poverty and in exile, him whose genius had carried their banners triumphant over all Europe, and whose incorruptible integrity had suffered him to retire penniless from the uncontrolled distribution of millions. It was thus that Marlborough was driven for a season into banishment, by the factious violence of the times acting upon a thoughtless and ungrateful people.* It

* It must, in justice to the French nation, be borne in mind, that France was then occupied by the foreign armies, and that the article of the Convention securing a general amnesty for all political offenders was violated in the person of Carnôt, little to the credit of any party concerned,

is thus that the coarse abuse of Wellington is, in our day, the favourite topic with thousands of his countrymen, under the absolute domination of those priests and demagogues whom they suffer to think for them, and whom they follow blindly, without ever exercising any will of their own more than if Providence had not endowed them with reason. But the people of all countries may be well assured that, as long as they become the willing instruments, the effective accomplices* of Royal crimes, or of sordid and unprincipled incendiaries, by remaining the passive spectators of such guilt, they never will be without the curse of despots—at one time crouching beneath the infliction of some hereditary scourge—at another betrayed by some more splendid military usurper—or both betrayed, and sold, and enthralled by a succession of vulgar tyrants.†

whether actively or passively. Let it be recorded to the eternal honour of the Prussian Government, that at Magdeburgh, where the illustrious exile passed his latter days, the soldiers had orders to salute him as often as he appeared in the streets. It is a similar homage to science and letters—to its own natural enemy, the Press—that the Prussian despotism pays in making its soldiers salute the statue of Guttenburg, in the towns of Westphalia.

* A truly disgusting anecdote is recorded in the memoirs of Lafayette published by his family. The Emperor Alexander positively assured the venerable republican that he had done all he could to prevent the extreme counter-revolutionary aspect of the arrangements at the Restoration, and, among other things, to make the King give up his favourite date of the reign from 1793, but that the servility of the Corps Législatif, who came with addresses of absolute submission, silenced him. The Emperor spoke with as much scorn of their baseness as he did of the incorrigible obstinacy of the Bourbons, whom he declared, with the exception of the Duke of Orleans (Louis Philippe), as "incorrigés, et incorrigibles." These vile deputies doubtless had thought to gain the Emperor's favour as much as Louis XVIII. did. It should be a warning to courtiers and apostates from the cause of the people, when they see how little Princes respect or thank them for the meanest compliances. (Mém. vol. v. p. 311.)

† The reader of this account of General Carnôt will recognize the service rendered to the author by M. Arago's admirable Eloge of that great man. He was favoured with the perusal of it by the kindness of his much-esteemed colleague before its publication. It has since been given to the world.

LAFAYETTE.

GREATLY inferior in capacity to Carnôt, but of integrity as firm, tempered by milder affections, and of as entire devotion to the principles of liberty, was the eminent and amiable person whose name heads this page; and it is a remarkable circumstance that the predominating gentleness of his nature, supplying the want of more hardy qualities, afforded him the power of resisting those with whom he was co-operating, when they left the right path and sullied the republican banner by their excesses,—a power in which the more stern frame of Carnôt's mind was found deficient. For it was the great and the rare praise of Lafayette—a praise hardly shared by him with any other revolutionary chief,—that he both bore a forward part in the scenes of two Revolutions, and refused steadily to move one step farther in either than his principles justified, or his conscientious opinion of the public good allowed.

In another particular he presents a singular and a romantic example of devotion to the cause of liberty when his own country was not concerned, and his station, his interests, nay, his personal safety, were strongly opposed to the sacrifice. A young nobleman, nearly connected with the highest families in Europe, fitted by his rank and by his personal qualities to be the ornament of the most brilliant court in the world, was seen to quit the splendid and luxurious circle in which he had just begun to shine, and, smit with an uncontrollable enthusiasm for American freedom, to run the gauntlet of the police and the Bastile of France

and the cruisers of England, that he might reach the Transatlantic shores, and share the victories of the popular chiefs, or mingle his blood with theirs. His escape to the theatre of glory was as difficult as if he had been flying from the scene of crimes. He withdrew in secret, travelled under a feigned name, hid himself under various disguises, hired a foreign vessel, escaped with extreme difficulty from the custom-house scrutiny, more than once narrowly missed capture on his passage, and was a proscribed man in his own country, until the chances of politics and of war threw its public councils into the same course which he had thus individually anticipated.

The generous zeal which carried him into the New World was not his only recommendation to the affection and gratitude of its inhabitants. His gallantry in the field could only be exceeded by the uniform mildness and modesty of his whole demeanor. Ever ready to serve wheresoever he could be of most use; utterly regardless of the station in which he rendered his assistance, whether called to convey an order as an aide-de-camp, or to encourage the flagging valour of the troops by his chivalrous example, or to lead a force through multiplied difficulties, or even to signalize himself by the hardest feat in the art of war,—commanding a retreat; never obtruding his counsels or his claims, but frankly tendering his opinion and seconding the pretensions of others rather than his own, with the weight of his merits and his name—he endeared himself to an army jealous of foreigners, by whom they had been much deceived, to a people remarkable for other qualities than delicacy of sentiment or quickness to acknowledge services rendered, and to a Chief whose great nature, if it had a defect, was somewhat saturnine, and little apt to bestow confidence, especially where disparity of years, as well as military rank, seemed almost to prescribe a more distant demeanour. The entire favour of this illustrious

man, which he naturally prized above all other possessions and gloried in above all other honours, he repaid by a devotion which increased his claims to it. When, in the jealousy of party, attempts were made to undermine the General's power, and those who would have sacrificed their country to gratify their personal spleen or envy, were seeking to detach the young Frenchman from his leader by the offer of a command separate and independent of Washington, he at once refused to hold it, and declared that he would rather be the aide-de-camp of the General than accept any station which could give him umbrage for an instant.

In order to perceive the extent of the affection which Lafayette had inspired into the American people, we must transport ourselves from the earliest to the latest scenes of his life, and contemplate certainly the most touching spectacle of national feelings, and the most honourable to both parties, which is anywhere to be seen in the varied page of history. Half a century after the cause of Independence had first carried him across the Atlantic, the soldier of liberty in many climes, the martyr to principles that had made him more familiar with the dungeon than with the palace of which he was born an inmate, now grown grey in the service of mankind, once more crossed the sea to revisit the seenes of his earlier battles, the objects of his youthful ardour, the remains of his ancient friendships. In a country torn with a thousand factions, the voice of party was instantaneously hushed. From twelve millions of people the accents of joy and gratulation at once burst forth, repeated through the countless cities that stud their vast territory, echoed over their unbounded savannahs and through their eternal forests. It was the gratitude of the whole nation, graven on their hearts in characters that could not be effaced, transmitted with their blood from parent to child, and seeking a vent, impetuous and uncontrolled, wherever its object, the general benefactor

and friend, appeared. Nothing but the miracle which should have restored Washington from the grave, could have drawn forth such a rapturous and such an universal expression of respect, esteem, and affection, as the reappearance amongst them of his favourite companion in arms, whose earliest years had been generously devoted to their service. The delicacy of their whole proceedings was as remarkable as the unanimity and the ardour which the people displayed. There was neither the doubtful vulgarity of natural coarseness, nor the unquestionable vulgarity of selfish affectation, to offend the most fastidious taste. All was rational and refined. The constituted authorities answered to the people's voice—the Legislature itself received the nation's guest in the bosom of the people's representatives, to which he could not by law have access—he was hailed and thanked as the benefactor and ally of the New World—and her gratitude was testified in munificent grants of a portion of the territory which he had helped to save. If there be those who can compare this grand manifestation of national feeling, entertained upon reasonable grounds and worthy of rational men, with the exhibitions of loyalty which have occasionally been made in England, and not feel somewhat humiliated by the contrast, they must, indeed, have strange notions, of what becomes a manly and reflecting people.

The part which Lafayette bore in the Revolutions of his own country was of far greater importance; and as it was played in circumstances of incomparably greater difficulty, so it will unavoidably give rise to a much greater diversity of opinion among those who judge upon its merits. In America, the only qualities required for gaining him the love and confidence of the people whom he had come to serve, were the gallantry of a chivalrous young man, the ingenuous frankness of his nature and his age, and his modest observance of their great chief. To these he added

more than a fair share of talents for military affairs, and never committed a single error, either of judgment or temper, that could ruffle the current of public opinion which set so strongly in towards him, from the admiration of his generous enthusiasm for the independent cause. Above all, no crisis ever arose in American affairs which could make the choice of his course a matter of the least doubt. Washington was his polar star, and to steer by that steady light was to pursue the path of the purest virtue, the most consummate wisdom. In France, the scene was widely different. Far from having a single point in controversy, like the champions of separation in the New World, the revolutionists of the Old had let loose the whole questions involved in the structure of the social system. Instead of one great tie being torn asunder, that which knit the colony to the parent State, while all other parts of the system were left untouched and unquestioned, in France the whole foundations of government, nay, of society itself, were laid bare, every stone that lay on another shaken, and all the superstructure taken to pieces, that it might be built up anew, on a different plan, if not on a different basis. To do this mighty work, the nation, far from having one leader of prominent authority, split itself into numberless factions, each claiming the preponderancy, and even in every faction there seemed almost as many leaders as partizans. A whole people had broken loose from all restraint; and while the difficulty and embarrassment of these mighty intestine commotions would have been above the reach of any wisdom and the control of any firmness, had they raged alone, it was incalculably aggravated and complicated by the menacing attitude which all Europe assumed towards the new order of things, portending war from the beginning, and very soon issuing in actual and formidable hostilities.

Such was the scene into which Lafayette found him-

self flung, with the feeble aid of his American experience, about as likely to qualify him for successfully performing his part in it, as the experience of a village schoolmaster or a small land-steward may be fitted to accomplish the ruler of a kingdom. This diversity, however, he was far from perceiving, and it is even doubtful if to the last he had discovered it. Hence his views were often narrow and contracted to an amazing degree; he could not comprehend how things which had succeeded in the councils of America should fail with the mob of Paris. He seems never to have been aware of the dangers of violence, which are as inseparably connected with all revolution as heat is with fire or motion with explosion. His calculations were made on a system which took no account of the agents that were to work it. His mechanism was formed on a theory that left out all consideration of the materials it was composed of—far more of their friction or of the air's resistance; and when it stuck fast on the first movement, or broke to pieces on the least stroke, he stood aghast, as if the laws of nature had been suspended, when it was only that the artist had never taken the trouble of consulting them. These remarks are peculiarly applicable to his conduct at the two first crises, one of which loosened his connexion with the Revolution, and the other broke it off,—the violent measures of the 20th of June, 1792, when he seems, for the first time, to have conceived it possible that a constitution, six months old, should be violated by the multitudes who had made it in a few weeks—and the events of the famous 10th of August, which astonished him, but no one else, with the spectacle of a monarchy stripped of all substantive strength, overthrown by the tempest in a soil where it had no root, and giving place to a Republic, the natural produce of the season and the ground.

Enamoured with that liberty for which he had fought and bled in America, no sooner did the troubles

break out in France than Lafayette at once plunged into the revolutionary party, and declared himself for the change. The violences that attended the 14th of July he seemed to have laïd upon the resistance made by the court; and was nothing scared even by the subsequent proceedings, which, though accompanied by no violence, yet inevitably led to the scenes of tumult that ensued. His error—nor is he the only deluded politician, nor his the only times rank with such delusions—his error, his grievous error, was to take no alarm at any measures that could be propounded, so they were adopted in present peace, and to regard all proceedings as harmless which were clothed with the forms of law. The cloud in the horizon he saw not, because it was of the size of a man's hand; but, indeed, he looked not out for it, because it was afar off: so when the tempest roared he was unprepared, and said, "I bargained not for this." To no one more fitly than to him could be administered the rebuke, "Les révolutions ne se font pas à l'eau de rose;"* for their necessary connexion with blood seems never to have struck him. Of Mr. Burke's wiser views he entertained a supreme contempt; and it is a truly marvellous thing that the Commander-in-chief of the National Guard, forty thousand strong—held together by no martial law—restrained by no pay—deliberating habitually with arms in their hands—acting one part at clubs or in the streets in the evening when dismissed from the parade, and another when called out—should never have dreamt of the contagious nature of tumultuary feelings and anarchical principles; and even after he had been compelled to resign the command on account of disorders committed by them, and only could be prevailed upon to resume it by their swearing to abstain for the future from such excesses, should have expected such an anomalous

* "Revolutions are not made with rose-water."

force to continue tractable as peace-officers, and to maintain the rigorous discipline of practised troops, untainted by the surrounding licence of all classes. There certainly must be admitted to have been more than the share of simplicity (*bon-hommie*) with which men who had gone through a revolution on both sides of the Atlantic might be supposed endowed, in a person of mature age, as well as large experience, being altogether confounded at the 20th of June and 10th of August, and abjuring all connexion with a scheme of change which was found capable of producing disorder.

It is one thing to partake of the atrocities which so revolted him, or even to defend them; it is another to be so scared with events very far from being unforeseen, further still from being out of the course of things in time of change, as to abandon the cause which these atrocities deformed foully, obstructed greatly, but could not alter in its essence and nature. It assuredly behoves all men to meditate deeply before they embark in a course which almost inevitably leads to the committing of popular excesses, and which may by no remote probability be attended with the perpetration of the most flagrant crimes, since it may become their duty not to leave the cause which they have espoused, merely because it has been tarnished by much of which they honestly disapprove. Although Lafayette never for a moment joined the enemy; although, even at the last moment of his command upon the frontier, and when he was placing himself in open hostility to the Government of Paris, he continued to take all possible precautions against a surprise by the Austrian army; and although, after his flight from France, he rather endured a long and cruel captivity at the constant hazard of his life, than lend even the countenance of a single phrase to the cause of the despots leagued against the liberties of his country; yet must it be confessed that his quitting

the troops under his orders exposed, and of necessity exposed, the French territory to the most imminent perils, and that his quitting France was a severe blow both to the cause of the Republic and to the national security. True, his devotion was to that cause, and his desertion was in abhorrence of the outrages committed in its name by wicked men. But then it is equally true that he had been placed in this position by his own free consent, not drawn into it with his eyes shut, and that this position made it quite impossible to oppose the wrongs done by pretended republicans and to fly from the scene of offences, without also damaging the cause of republican government and shaking the very existence of France as an independent state.

But if Lafayette's mistake was great, through the whole of the critical times in which he acted so eminent a part, his integrity was unimpeached, his reputation unsullied, his consistency unbroken. Having laid down to himself the rule, so safe for virtue, but which would keep good men at a distance from all revolutionary movements—never to hold any fellowship with crime, even for the salvation of the country—never to do, or to suffer, or so much as to witness evil that good may come, even the supreme good of the public safety—by that rule he uniformly held from the taking of the Bastile down to the excesses of June, 1792, and from thence till he quitted in August, the soil tarnished with the overthrow of the Law and the Constitution. To the Court, when it would encroach upon the rights of the nation—to the people, when they would infringe the prerogative of the Crown—he alike presented a manful and uncompromising resistance. The delusion of the Royal Family prevented them from perceiving his inflexible honesty, and they alone doubted his title to their entire confidence. Blinded by groundless expectations that he would take part against the Revolution; judging his honesty

by their own, and fancying his zeal for liberty was affected; flattering themselves, in utter oblivion of his whole previous history, that he was an aristocrat, a royalist, nay, an absolutist at heart, and that the patrician volunteer for American freedom would stand by his order when the crisis arrived, their disappointment at finding him more honest than they had believed was truly princely; for nothing is more implacable than a sovereign when he finds his calculations of human baseness frustrated, by virtue being unexpectedly found where its existence was supposed impossible. The ingratitude of the Court was in the proportion of this disappointment. All the great citizen's services to the Royal Family, whose lives he repeatedly had saved at the risk of his own popularity, if not of his personal safety, were forgotten. His resigning the command of sixty battalions of National Guards, because a handful of them had joined in insulting the King, went for nothing. While Danton, whom they represented as having sold himself and given his receipt for the price, was trusted; while the utmost grief was shown at the death of the venal Mirabeau, because he too had been bought; the King and Queen, in their letters to the Count d'Artois, then an emigrant at Coblentz, described Lafayette as a "scélérat et fanatique," whom no one could confide in, simply because no one could bribe him from his duty; and the wise Count expressed his lively satisfaction at finding the reports groundless of his relatives reposing any trust in one over whom "avarice gave no hold, as in Mirabeau's case; one who was a mere madman and enthusiast." Even when Lafayette hurried to Paris from his head-quarters on the frontier, in order to repress the outrages of June, 1792, all pointed against the Royal Family, the Queen said, "It was better to perish than owe their safety to Lafayette and the Constitutional party;" and Mr. Windham, with a degree of thoughtlessness only to be explained by the

frenzy of his anti-Gallican feelings and his devotion to Mr. Burke, cited the same royal authority as decisive against Lafayette, she having been heard to say, "I will place myself between Barnave and the executioner, but Lafayette I never can forgive." How touching is the admission of this unhappy princess's daughter, the Duchess d'Angoulême, on this subject; and how well does it express the error into which her parents had fallen! "Si ma mère eût pu vaincre ses préventions contre M. de Lafayette, si on lui eût accordé plus de confiance, mes malheureux parents vivraient encore!"* This distrust of the General is thus laid, and on the highest authority, upon the Queen. But no one can doubt that a principal ground of it in her mind was the conviction that he never would lend himself to her intrigues—to such faithless proceedings as that which was the main cause of Louis's fate and her own, the flight to Varennes, and the declaration left behind, revoking all the promises previously made, and affirming that they had been extorted by force.

For this mistrust it is far more than a recompense that it was confined to the Court of Versailles. Men of all parties join in testifying their absolute belief in Lafayette's inflexible integrity; and men of more than ordinary sagacity and reflection have added that he alone passed unscathed through the revolutionary furnace, alone trod without a fall the slippery path of those changeful scenes.—"La réflexion," says Mr. Fox, in a letter on his release, "que vous êtes presque tout seul en droit de faire d'avoir joué un rôle dans ce qui s'est passé en France sans avoir rien à vous reprocher, doit être bien consolante."†—"Tenez, mon cher," said Napoleon to him when exceedingly hurt by

* "If my mother could have conquered her prejudice against M. de Lafayette, if he had only been more trusted, my unhappy parents would have still been alive."

† "The reflection which you almost alone have a right to make, that you have nothing wherewith to reproach yourself in all the part you have played through the revolution, ought to be a great consolation."

his consistent refusal to support his arbitrary government, "une belle conduite, c'est la vôtre! Mener les affaires de son pays, et en cas de naufrage n'avoir rien de commun avec ses ennemis, voilà ce qu'il faut."*

The inextinguishable hatred of despots is, however, his best panegyric. No sooner had he quitted his command, and passed into the Prussian territory on his way to a neutral country, than he was seized by the allied army; and, when he refused all offers of joining them against his country, nay, would not open his mouth to give the least information which could aid their schemes of invasion, he and his companions, Latour-Maubourg and Bureaux-Pusy, were cast into a noisome dungeon at Wezel, where, for three months, rigorously separated from each other, they had each a sentinel day and night in his cell. Thence they were transferred, for a year, to Magdeburg, and confined in damp holes, of five paces long by three broad. The remaining portion of their five years' confinement was spent in a similar dungeon at Olmutz; and to such a pitch of rigour was the imprisonment carried, that, when his sufferings brought Lafayette apparently to his death-bed, and he desired to see one of his companions in misery, the permission to receive his last sigh was peremptorily refused. After five years of solitary confinement, such as felons who had committed the greatest crimes could alone by law be made to undergo, these patriots, who were not even prisoners of war, who were seized and detained in utter violation of the law of nations, whose only offence was their having devoted themselves to the cause of freedom in reforming the institutions of their own country, and having abandoned their coadjutors when they combined outrage with reform, were at length liberated by the influence of the victorious Republic at the courts of

* "Stay, dear man, for a fine conduct, it is yours. To lead in one's country's affairs, and, in case of her making shipwreck, to have nothing in common with her enemies—that's the true course."

the princes whom her arms had subdued. Then there walked forth from the darkness of their noisome dungeons victims of tyranny, grown grey with suffering, not with years, and old before their time, to deplore the loss of so many of the best days of their lives, and to bear about for the residue of their existence the maladies which their maltreatment had engendered. Let such passages as this be borne in mind when men inveigh against the crimes of the people. The summary vengeance that terminates a victim's life is not always more harsh than the infliction of such torments as these; and the cruelty thus for years perpetrated on men, the martyrs of liberty, merely because they would not be sold to their country's enemies, has at least this feature, more hateful than any that marks the excesses of popular fury: it is cold-blooded, it is deliberate, and never can plead in its justification the uncontrollable force of sudden excitement.*

* It is truly painful to perceive in Mr. Burke's correspondence lately published, the marks of his mind being wholly perverted on all subjects by the "one idea" which filled it, his horror of the French Revolution. Of its atrocities no abhorrence could be too great; but his faculties seem to have been absolutely bewildered by that feeling. Thus he falls into the senseless prejudice against Lafayette of the French Queen, and even goes beyond her; for he wholly disregards the foul injustice of his treatment by the Austrians, and is quite satisfied he should suffer, in whatever way. The manner in which he speaks of the Queen is a great contrast to his public passages; he regards her as the spirit of petty intrigue, and as having ruined the cause. His want of practical judgment in the measures he proposes is truly marvellous. Thus when Mr. North is going on a mission to Corsica, Mr. Burke, as late as December, 1794, addressing Mr. Windham, then Secretary at War, asks, "Why he is not rather sent to Rome to form an Italian league and raise an army in the Ecclesiastical States (not yet exhausted by levies) for the defence of Corsica in the first instance (which he holds to be the defence of Italy), and after to throw in wherever it may be wanted?"—(iv., 255). Surely he had no great reason to complain, as he continually does, that his views of saving Europe were not adopted by practical statesmen. His preceding "one idea" had been the guilt of Hastings; and his errors, almost delusions, while that held possession of him, have been already pointed out. When the two ideas concurred, the havoc made in his understanding was more prodigious still. He actually represents all East Indians as Jacobins! But nothing is more remarkable in this great man's history than the perfect contrast which is

The, perhaps, over-scrupulous nature of Lafayette having led him immediately on his liberation to express his strong disapproval of the *coup d'état* or revolution which expelled Carnôt and Barthélemy from the Directory, he remained abroad until the return of Buonaparte from Egypt, and the establishment of the Consulship. True to his principles, he again was found refusing all fellowship with him whom he already perceived to have the propensities and to be compassing the plans of a despot. He remained in seclusion, living in the bosom of his family, till the fall of the Imperial dynasty, and then during the first Restoration, with the proceedings of which he was still less satisfied than with the Empire. At length, when the second entry of the allies, after the battle of Waterloo, gave him a voice in public affairs, it was exerted to occasion Napoleon's abdication, with the senseless and extravagant view of proclaiming the King of Rome Emperor, under a Regency—a project which, in the mind of every man endowed with common understanding, meant the second restoration of the Bourbons. This, which he least desired, accordingly instantly followed, and the pedantry of Lafayette must bear much of the blame due to that event, and the final expulsion of Napoleon,—a measure which he would be a bold man who should now defend as the best that could have been adopted in the circumstances.

In 1830 we once more find him commanding the National Guards, and commanding too the respect and esteem of all his fellow-citizens. His well-known partiality for a republic again displayed itself; but, satisfied that no such thing was now possible in France, he declared himself for a "Monarchy surrounded with Republican Institutions." It is, perhaps, almost as

exhibited by his calm, profound, truly practical counsel, and as truly enlightened judgment on all questions of policy and of principle, as long as his faculties, free from the dominion of those two prepossessions, have full scope and fair play.

certain a truth as can be well stated in political science, that to maintain a Monarchy there must be a circumvallation of Monarchical Institutions. Nor is it easy to conceive how royalty can exist, unless in mere name, with a military force spread over the country having the choice of its own officers; with a Chamber of Peers possessing no substantive right whatever, nominated by the court and stripped of even moderate wealth; and with such a general concurrence of the people in the choice of their representatives as must exist if these are to represent the country in anything but the title they assume.

That the capacity of Lafayette was far less eminent than his virtues, we have already had frequent opportunity to remark. To eloquence he made no pretensions, but his written compositions are of great merit; clear, plain, sensible, often forcible in the expression of just sentiment and natural feeling, always marked with the sincerity so characteristic of the man. His conversation was unavoidably interesting, after all he had seen and had suffered; but his anecdotes of the American War and French Revolution were given with a peculiar liveliness and grace, set off with a modesty and a candour alike attractive to the listener. He was extremely well informed upon most general subjects; had read history with care and discrimination; had treasured up the lessons of his own experience; was over-scrupulous in his applications of these to practice, somewhat apt to see all things through the medium of American views, generally forgetting the progress that men had made since 1777, and almos always ready to abandon what he was engaged in, if it could not be carried on precisely according to his own conscientious views of what was prudent and right. But in private life he was faultless: kind, warm-hearted, mild, tolerant of all differences civil and religious, venerated in his family, beloved by his friends, and respected even in his manifest errors by all with

whom he ever held any intercourse. The appearance of such a personage at any time is of rare occurrence; but by one whose life was spent in courts, in camps, in the turmoil of faction, in the disturbances of civil war, in the extremities of revolutionary violence, it may well be deemed a wonder that such a character should be displayed even for a season, and little short of a miracle that such virtue should walk through such scenes untouched.

TALLEYRAND.

Among the eminent men who figured in the eventful annals of the French Revolution, there has been more than one occasion for mentioning M. Talleyrand; and whether in that scene, or in any portion of modern annals, we shall in vain look for one who presents a more interesting subject of history. His whole story was marked with strange peculiarities, from the period of infancy to the latest scenes of a life protracted to extreme, but vigorous and undecayed, old age. Born to represent one of the most noble families in France, an accident struck him with incurable lameness; and the cruel habits of their pampered caste made his family add to this infliction the deprivation of his rank as eldest son. He was thus set aside for a brother whose faculties were far more crippled by nature than his own bodily frame had been by mischance; and was condemned to the ecclesiastical state, by way of at once providing for him and getting rid of him. A powerful house, however, could not find in Old France much difficulty in securing promotion in the Church for one of its members, be his disposition towards its duties ever so reluctant, or his capacity for performing them ever so slender. The young Perigord was soon raised over the heads of numberless pious men and profound theologians, and became Bishop of Autun at an age when he had probably had little time for reflection upon his clerical functions, amidst the dissipations of the French capital, into which neither his personal misfortune, nor the domestic deposition occasioned by it, had prevented him from plunging with all the zeal

of his strenuous and indomitable nature. His abilities were of the highest order; and the brilliancy with which they soon shone out was well calculated to secure him signal success in Parisian society, where his rank would alone have gained him a high place, but where talents also, even in the humblest station, never failed to rise in the face of the aristocratic 'genius of the place,' and the habits of a nation of courtiers.

The great event of modern times now converted all Frenchmen into politicians—gave to state affairs the undisturbed monopoly of interest which the pleasures of society had before enjoyed—and armed political talents with the influence which the higher accomplishments of refined taste and elegant manners had hitherto possessed undivided and almost uncontrolled. M. Talleyrand did not long hesitate in choosing his part. He sided with the Revolution party, and continued to act with them; joining those patriotic members of the clerical body who gave up their revenues to the demands of the country, and sacrificed their exclusive privileges to the rights of the community. But when the violence of the Republican leaders, disdaining all bounds of prudence, or of justice, or of humanity, threatened to involve the whole country in anarchy and blood, he quitted the scene; and retired first to this country, where he passed a year or two, and then to America, where he remained until the more regular government of the Executive Directory tempered the violence of the Revolution, and restored order to the State. Since that period he always filled the highest stations either at home or in the diplomatic service, except during a part of the Restoration Government, when the incurable folly of those Princes, who, as he said himself, had come back from their long exile without having either learnt or forgotten anything, deemed it prudent to lay upon the shelf the ablest and most experienced man in the country, that their councils might have the benefit of being swayed

by the Polignacs and other imbecile creatures of their legitimate Court.

But it is from this constant employment of M. Talleyrand that the principal charge against the integrity of his political character has been drawn. The Chief Minister and Councillor of the Directory, he became suddenly the chief adviser of the Consular Government. When Napoleon took the whole power to himself, he continued his Minister. When the independence of Switzerland was rudely invaded, he still presided over the department of Foreign Affairs. When the child and champion of Jacobinism had laid his parent prostrate in the dust, clothed himself with the Imperial purple, maltreated the Pope, and planted the iron crown of Italy on his own brow, the republican ex-bishop remained in his service. When he who afterwards so eloquently avowed, that "General, Consul, Emperor, he owed all to the people," studied to discharge that debt by trampling on every popular right, the advocate of freedom was still to be seen by his side, and holding the pen through which all the rescripts of despotic power flowed. When the adopted Frenchman, who, with the dying accents of the same powerful and racy eloquence, desired that "his ashes might repose near the stream of the Seine, in the bosom of the people whom he had so much loved," was testifying the warmth of his affection by such tokens as the merciless conscription, and breathing out his tenderness in proclamations of war that wrapped all France and all Europe in flame—the philosophic statesman,—the friend of human improvement,—the philanthropist who had speculated upon the nature of man and the structure of government in both worlds, and had quitted his original profession because its claims were inimical to the progress of society,—continued inseparably attached to the person of the military ruler, the warrior-tyrant; and, although he constantly tendered sounder advice than ever was

followed, never scrupled to be the executor of Ordinances which he still most disapproved. The term of boundless, unreflecting, and miscalculating ambition was hastened by its excesses; Napoleon was defeated; foreign powers occupied France; and the Emperor's Minister joined them to restore the Bourbons. With them he acted for some time, nor quitted them until they disclosed the self-destructive bent of their feeble and unprincipled minds,—to rule by tools incapable of any acts but those of sycophancy and prostration, and animated by no spirit but that of blind and furious bigotry. The overthrow of the dynasty once more brought M. Talleyrand upon the scene; and he was ever after the most trusted, as the most valuable and skilful, of all the new Government's advisers; nor have the wisdom and the firmness of any counsels, except indeed those of the Monarch himself, contributed so signally as M. Talleyrand's to the successful administration of that great Prince, in the unparalleled difficulties of his truly arduous position.

That these well-known passages in M. Talleyrand's life indicate a disposition to be on the successful side, without any very nice regard to its real merits, can hardly be denied; and when facts, so pregnant with evidence, are before the reader, he has not merely materials for judging of the character to which they relate, but may almost be said to have had its lineaments presented to his view, without the aid of the historian's pencil to pourtray them. But the just discrimination of the historian is still wanting to complete the picture; both by filling up the outline, and by correcting it when hastily drawn from imperfect materials. Other passages of the life may be brought forward: explanations may be given of doubtful actions; apparent inconsistencies may be reconciled; and charges, which at first sight seemed correctly gathered from the facts, may be aggravated, extenuated, or repelled, by a more enlarged and a more judicial view of the whole subject.

That the inferences fairly deduced from M. Talleyrand's public life can be wholly countervailed by any minuteness of examination, or explained away by any ingenuity of comment, it would be absurd to assert; yet it is only doing justice to comprise in our estimate of his merits some things not usually taken into the account by those who censure his conduct, and who pronounce him—merely upon the view of his having borne part in such opposite systems of policy, and acted with such various combinations of party—to have been a person singularly void of public principle, and whose individual interest was always his god.

His conduct towards the caste he belonged to has been remarked upon with severity. But to that caste he owed only cruel and heartless oppression, and all for an accident that befell him in the cradle. He was not only disinherited, but he literally never was allowed to sleep under his father's roof. His demeanour, in respect to sacred matters, unbecoming his profession as a priest, has called down censures of a far graver description. But he was made by force to enter a profession which he abhorred; and upon those who forced him, not upon himself, falls the blame of his conduct having been unsuited to the cloth which they compelled him to wear. It, moreover, is true, but it has been always forgotten in the attacks upon his ecclesiastical character, that he gallantly undertook the defence of his sacred order, at a time when such devotion to a most unpopular body exposed him to destruction. That he went into exile, leaving his fortune behind and subsisting when abroad upon the sale of his books, rather than be contaminated by any share whatever in the enormities of the first Revolution, is a circumstance equally true and equally kept in the shade by his traducers. When the dissipations of his earlier years are chronicled, no allusion is ever made to the severity of his studies at the Sorbonne, where he was only known as a young man of haughty demeanour and

silent habits, who lived buried among his books. Unable to deny his wit, and overcome by the charms of his conversation, envious men have refused him even solid capacity, and the merit of having rendered more important services to society; but they have only been able to make this denial by forgetting the profound discourse upon Lotteries which laid the foundation of his fame; and the works upon Public Education, upon Weights and Measures, and upon Colonial Policy, which raised the superstructure. No mitigation of the judgment pronounced on his accommodating, or what has perhaps justly been called his time-serving, propensities, has ever been effected by viewing the courage which he showed in opposing Napoleon's Spanish war; the still more dangerous energy with which he defended the clerical body in his diocese at a time full of every kind of peril to political integrity; and his exclusion from power by the restored dynasty, whose return to the French throne was mainly the work of his hands, but whose service he quitted rather than concur in a policy humiliating to his country. Nor has any account been taken of the difficult state of affairs, and the imminent risk of hopeless anarchy on the one hand, or complete conquest on the other, to which France was exposed by the fortune of war, and the hazards of revolution;—an alternative presented to him in more than one of those most critical emergencies in which he was called to decide for his country as well as himself. Yet all these circumstances must be weighed together with the mere fact of his successive adhesion to so many governments, if we would avoid doing his memory the grossest injustice, and would escape the most manifest error in that fair estimate of his political virtue which it should be our object to form.

But if the integrity of this famous personage be the subject of unavoidable controversy, and if our opinion regarding it must of necessity be clouded with some

doubt, and at best be difficult satisfactorily to fix—upon the talents with which he was gifted, and his successful cultivation of them, there can be no question whatever; and our view of them is unclouded and clear. His capacity was most vigorous and enlarged. Few men have ever been endowed with a stronger natural understanding; or have given it a more diligent culture, with a view to the pursuits in which he was to employ it. His singular acuteness could at once penetrate every subject; his clearness of perception at a glance unravelled all complications, and presented each matter distinct and unencumbered; his sound, plain, manly sense, at a blow got rid of all the husk, and pierced immediately to the kernel. A cloud of words was wholly thrown away upon him; he cared nothing for all the declamation in the world; ingenious topics, fine comparisons, cases in point, epigrammatic sentences, all passed innocuous over his head. So the storms of passion blew unheeded past one whose temper nothing could ruffle, and whose path towards his object nothing could obstruct. It was a lesson and a study, as well as a marvel, to see him disconcert, with a look of his keen eye, or a motion of his chin, a whole piece of wordy talk, and far-fetched and fine-spun argument, without condescending to utter, in the deep tones of his most powerful voice, so much as a word or an interjection;—far less to overthrow the flimsy structure with an irresistible remark, or consume it with a blighting sarcasm. Whoever conversed with him, or saw him in conversation, at once learnt both how dangerous a thing it was to indulge before him in loose prosing, or in false reasoning, or in frothy declamation; and how fatal an error he would commit who should take the veteran statesman's good-natured smile for an innocent insensibility to the ludicrous, and his apparently passive want of all effort for permanent indolence of mind. There are many living examples of persons not meanly gifted

who, in the calm of his placid society, have been wrecked among such shoals as these.

But his political sagacity was above all his other great qualities; and it was derived from the natural perspicacity to which we have adverted, and that consummate knowledge of mankind—that swift and sure tact of character—into which his long and varied experience had matured the faculties of his manly, yet subtle understanding. If never to be deluded by foolish measures, nor ever to be deceived by cunning men, be among the highest perfections of the practical statesmen, where shall we look for any one who preferred stronger claims to this character? But his statesmanship was of no vulgar cast. He despised the silly, the easy, and false old maxims which inculcate universal distrust, whether of unknown men or of novel measures, as much as he did the folly of those whose facility is an advertisement for impostors or for enthusiasts to make dupes of them. His was the skill which knew as well where to give his confidence as to withhold it; and he knew full surely that the whole difficulty of the political art consists in being able to say whether any given person or scheme belongs to the right class or to the wrong. It would be very untrue to affirm that he never wilfully deceived others; but it would probably be still more erroneous to admit that he ever in his life was deceived. So he held in utter scorn the affected wisdom of those who think they prove themselves sound practical men by holding cheap every proposal to which the world has been little or not at all accustomed, and which relies for its support on principles rarely resorted to. His own plan for maintaining the peace and independence of Belgium may be cited as an example of a policy at once refined and profound. He would have had it made the resort of the fine arts and of letters, with only force enough to preserve its domestic peace, and trusting for its protection to the general abhorrence

which all Europe must have, in these times, of any proceeding hostile to such a power.

Although M. Talleyrand never cultivated the art of oratory, yet his brilliant wit, enlivening a constant vein of deep sense and original observation, and his extraordinary mastery over all the resources of the language in which he expressed himself, gave to the efforts of his pen, as well as to his conversation, a relish, a charm, and a grace, that few indeed have ever attained, and certainly none have surpassed. His thorough familiarity with the best writers of his own country was manifest in all his compositions, as well as in his talk; which, however, was too completely modulated to the tone of the most refined society, ever to wear the least appearance of pedantry. To cite examples of the felicitous turns of his expression in writing, would be to take almost any passage at random of the few works which he has left. But the following description of the American Planter may suffice to show how he could paint moral as well as natural scenery. The writers of a less severe school might envy its poetical effect, and might perhaps learn how possible it is to be pointed and epigrammatic without being affected, and sentimental without being mawkish.

"Le bucheron Américain ne s'intéresse à rien; toute idée sensible est loin de lui; ces branches si élégamment jettées par la nature, un beau feuillage, une couleur vive qui anime une partie du bois, un verd plus fort qui en assombroit une autre, tout cela n'est rien: il n'a de souvenir à placer nulle part: c'est la quantité de coups de hache qu'il faut qu'il donne pour abattre un arbre, qui est son unique idée. Il n'a point plante; il n'en sait point les plaisirs. L'arbre qu'il planteroit n'est bon à rien pour lui; car jamais il ne le verra assez fort pour qu'il puisse l'abattre: c'est de détruire qui le fait vivre: on détruit par-tout: aussi tout lieu lui est bon; il ne tient pas au champ où il a placé son travail, parce que son travail n'est que de la

fatigue, et qu'aucune idée douce n'y est jointe. Ce qui sort de ses mains ne passe point par toutes les croissances si attachantes pour le cultivateur; il ne suit pas la destinée de ses productions; il ne connoit par le plaisir des nouveaux essais: et si en s'en allant il n'oublie pas sa hache, il ne laisse pas de regrets là où il a vecu des années."*

Of his truly inimitable conversation, and the mixture of strong masculine sense and exquisitely witty turns in which it abounded,—independently of the interest and the solid value which it derived from a rich fund of anecdote, delivered in the smallest number possible of the most happy and most appropriate words possible,—it would indeed be difficult to convey an adequate idea. His own powers of picturesque and wonderfully condensed expression would be hardly sufficient to present a portrait of its various and striking beauties. Simple and natural, yet abounding in the most sudden and unexpected turns—full of point, yet evidently the inspiration of the moment, and therefore more absolutely to the purpose than if it had been the laboured effort of a day's reflection, a single word often performing the office of sentences, nay, a tone not unfrequently rendering many words superfluous—always the phrase most perfectly suitable selected, and its place most happily chosen—all this is literally correct, and no picture of fancy, but a mere abridgment

* "The American woodman takes no interest in anything; all sensible ideas are far from him; those branches so elegantly thrown by nature, a beautiful foliage, a lively colour animating one part of the wood, a deeper green making the rest sombre—all this is nothing; he has no recollections to place anywhere: it is the number of strokes which he must give to fell a tree that is his only idea. He has not planted; he knows not that pleasure. The tree he might plant would never benefit him; for he could not see it of a size to be felled by him. It is destruction by which he lives; everywhere destroying goes on, so everywhere he is at home; he cares nothing for the spot where he has laboured, because labour is only fatigue, and no pleasing association is connected with it. What comes through his hands does not pass through all the stages of growth which so attach the cultivator; he follows not the fate of his productions; he knows not the pleasure of new efforts; and if, on his removal, he forgets not his axe, he leaves behind him no regrets for the spot where he has lived for years."

and transcript of the marvellous original; and yet it all falls very short of conveying its lineaments, and fails still more to render its colouring and its shades. For there was a constant gaiety of manner, which had the mirthful aspect of good humour, even on the eve or on the morrow of some flash in which his witty raillery had wrapt a subject or a person in ridicule, or of some torrent in which his satire had descended instantaneous but destructive—there was an archness of malice, when more than ordinary execution must be done, that defied the pencil of the describer, as it did the attempts of the imitator—there were manners the most perfect in ease, in grace, in flexibility—there was the voice of singular depth and modulation, and the countenance alike fitted to express earnest respect, unostentatious contempt, and bland complacency—and all this must really have been witnessed to be accurately understood. His sayings—his *mots*, as the French have it—are renowned; but these alone convey an imperfect idea of his whole conversation. They show indeed the powers of his wit, and the felicity of his concise diction; and they have a peculiarity of style, such that, if shown without a name, no one could be at a loss to whom he should attribute them. But they are far enough from completing the sketch of his conversation to those who never heard it. A few instances may, however, be given, chiefly to illustrate what has been said of his characteristic conciseness and selection.

Being asked if a certain authoress, whom he had long since known, but who belonged rather to the last age, was not "un peu ennuyeuse," "Du tout," said he; "elle était *parfaitement* ennuyeuse."*—A gentleman in company was one day making a somewhat zealous eulogy of his mother's beauty, dwelling upon the topic at uncalled-for length—he himself having certainly inherited no portion of that kind under the marriage

* "A little tiresome?"—"Not at all: she was *perfectly* tiresome."

of his parents.—"C'était, donc, monsieur votre père qui apparemment n'était pas trop bien,"* was the remark which at once released the circle from the subject.—When Madame de Staël published her celebrated novel of *Delphine*, she was supposed to have painted herself in the person of the heroine, and M. Talleyrand in that of an elderly lady, who is one of the principal characters. "On me dit (said he, the first time he met her) que nous sommes tous les deux dans votre roman, déguisés en femme."†—Rulhières, the celebrated author of the work on the Polish Revolution, having said, "Je n'ai fait qu'un méchanceté de ma vie;" "Et quand finira-t-elle?"‡ was M. Talleyrand's reply.—"Genève est ennuyeuse, n'est-ce pas?" asked a friend; "Surtout quand on s'y amuse,"§ was the answer.—"Elle est insupportable" (said he, with marked emphasis, of one well known; but as if he had gone too far, and to take off something of what he had laid on, he added) "Elle n'a que ce défaut là."‖—"Ah, je sens les tourmens d'enfer," said a person in great agony, whose life had been supposed to be somewhat of the loosest. "Déjà?"¶ was the inquiry suggested to M. Talleyrand.—Nor ought we to pass over the only *mot* that ever will be recorded of Charles X., uttered on his return to France in 1814, on seeing, like our second Charles at a similar reception, that the adversaries of his family had disappeared, "Il n'y a qu'un Français de plus."** This was the suggestion of

* "It was your father, then, apparently, who may not have been very well favoured?"

† "They tell me that we are both of us in your novel, in the disguise of women."

‡ "I never did but one mischievous thing in my life."—"And when will it be over?"

§ "Is not Geneva dull?"—"Especially when they amuse themselves."

‖ "She is unsupportable. It is her only defect."

¶ "Ah! I feel the torments of hell."—"Already?"—[Certainly it came naturally to him: it is, however, not original. The Cardinal de Retz's physician is said to have made a similar exclamation on a like occasion:—"Déjà, Eminence?"]

** "There's only one Frenchman the more."

M. Talleyrand. He afterwards proposed, in like manner, to Charles's successor, that the foolish freaks of the Duchess de Berri should be visited with this rescript to her and her faction—"Madame, il n'y a plus d'espoir pour vous. Vous serez jugée, condamnée, et graciée."*

Of his temper and disposition in domestic life, it remains to speak; and nothing could be more perfect than these. If it be true, which is, however, more than questionable, that a life of public business hardens the heart; if this be far more certainly the tendency of a life much chequered with various fortune; if he is almost certain to lose his natural sympathies with mankind, who has in his earliest years tasted the bitter cup of cruel and unnatural treatment, commended to his lips by the hands that should have cherished him; if, above all, a youth of fashionable dissipation and intrigue, such as M. Talleyrand, like most of our own great men undeniably led, has, in almost every instance, been found to eradicate the softer domestic feelings, and to plant every selfish weed in the cold soil of a neglected bosom—surely it is no small praise of his kindly and generous nature, that we are entitled to record how marked an exception he formed to all these rules. While it would be a foolish and a needless exaggeration to represent him as careless of his own interest, or ambition, or gratification, at any period of his life, it is nevertheless quite true that his disposition continued to the last gentle and kindly; that he not only entertained throughout the tempest of the revolutionary anarchy the strongest abhorrence of all violent and cruel deeds, but exerted his utmost influence in mitigating the excesses which led to them in others; that his love of peace in all its blessed departments, whether tranquillity at home, or amity and good-will abroad, was the incessant motive of his

* "Madam, no hope remains for you. You will be tried, condemned, and pardoned."

labours; that, in domestic life, he was of a peculiarly placid temper, and full of warm and steady affections. His aversion to all violent courses was, indeed, in some instances, carried to a length which prevented his wonted calmness of judgment, and his constant and characteristic love of justice, even when an adversary was concerned, from having their free scope. He never could speak with patience of Carnôt, for having continued, during the Reign of Terror, to serve and to save his country by directing the war which defended her against Europe in arms;—forgetting how much less could be urged for his own conduct under the profligate and tyrannical Directory of 1797 and 1798, under the conscriptions of Napoleon, and under the military occupation of the Allies,—even admitting his predominant desire to prevent anarchy and conquest, —than might most fairly be offered in defence of that illustrious Republican's inflexible and uncompromising, though stern and undaunted virtue.

TALLIEN.

THE partizans of Robespierre always regarded Tallien with greater hatred and contempt than any of the other Thermidorians,—even Collôt, or Billaud Varennes; and the same feeling prevails among the descendants of those men, none of themselves being now left. However widely we may differ with them upon the merits of the one party, there can be very little reason to charge them even with exaggeration in their condemnation of the other. In forming an opinion upon some, both of the Girondins and of the Dantonists, we shall find them unsafe guides; but there can be no doubt that they are entitled, upon the undeniable facts, to represent Tallien as one of the most unprincipled men who appeared in the whole course of the Revolution.

Like many of those leaders he began life in very humble circumstances—Collôt, was a third-rate player;* Louvet, a bookseller's shopman; Merlin de Thionville, a tipstaff; Chaumette, a cabin boy; Hebert, a check-taker at a theatre; Tallien's father was a menial servant in the family of a nobleman (Marquis de Berg), who gave him some education, and then procured him a small place in the revenue. The obligations which he owed to his patron's family were repaid by the most bitter enmity towards the class they belonged to; and, before he was of age, he had founded a club and a journal, with the design of propagating not only democratic but levelling principles. He possessed little talent as a writer, but had considerable power of speaking, and especially of invective. Danton patronized him; and on the 10th of August he showed a degree of courage which still further gained him that

leader's favour. He had, previously, by his violence, ingratiated himself with the Commune, and had not only been the spokesman of some of their deputations, in their seditious, indeed, rebellious addresses, to the Legislative Body, but been appointed to the office of Secrétaire du Greffe of the Municipality.

He has always been since, as he was at the time, charged with having had a principal share in the massacres of the prisons (September, 1792); and the prevailing belief has been, that the execution of this horrible crime was superintended by him and the execrable Marat. That this wretch should be suspected of it was not only natural but almost unavoidable, after he had openly, for months, been recommending wholesale murder, both in his infamous paper and in his harangues to clubs and mobs. But the speech of Tallien, immediately after the domiciliary visits had filled the prisons with victims of the aristocratic and ecclesiastical orders, and when the Commune was supposed to be bent upon their destruction, almost proves him to have been an accessory before the fact. He appeared at the bar of the Assembly to defend the Commune; attacked Vergniaud and others of the Gironde party; and affirming that "the visits and the arrest of the refractory priests had been sanctioned by the orders of the Legislature," he added, "that they were in safe custody, and that in a few days the soil of liberty would be delivered from their presence." In the sitting of the 2d September, while the massacre was actually perpetrating, he described the unhappy victims as "sacrificed to the just vengeance of the people." When in the Convention, now assembled, Marat was attacked by the same party soon after the massacre, and was on the point of being arrested amidst the universal execrations of the Assembly, Danton and Robespierre having, with marked disapproval of his general conduct, hardly stirred in his defence, Tallien stood forward with a motion, which

was carried, and saved him. When he defended the Commune charged with the massacres, his own knowledge of which was assumed as following from his official situation in the municipality, he excused the atrocity by maintaining—first, that the Commune had not the power of preventing them; and next, that those who had perished were notoriously guilty of common offences, such as dealing in forged assignats. Again, when the Gironde had obtained a decree against the perpetrators of the massacre, Tallien dexterously obtained another against all who had borne a part in the defence of the Royal family on the 10th of August; and this at once made the Gironde decree fall to the ground. It may safely be affirmed, that Tallien's share in the horrors of September is proved by these circumstances of perfect notoriety, and on all hands admitted, more satisfactorily than if we only had the direct statements of persons themselves engaged in the scene, and whose credit would be subject to suspicion. The known facts lead to the inference which it would be most difficult to evade, even if he had ever given a direct denial to the charge, which hung over him during all his after life; but that direct denial he never did give, resting satisfied with argumentative and declamatory appeals and recriminations.

But there are not wanting many specific statements to which the admitted facts lend great credit, and which, if believed, bring the guilt of the massacres distinctly home to him. Thus, Senart had access to all the evidence before the Committee of General Safety (*Sûreté Générale*), of which he was *Secrétaire Redacteur*,* and of course all the papers passed through his hands. He was, however, a strong supporter of the Mountain party, at least a decided enemy of the Gironde and Dantonists; a violent, and, apparently, a conscientious Republican. His memoirs were written

* A kind of Precis-writer.

in the prison, to which he had been committed, as well as D'Ossonville, and others, who, from their employment under the committee, became acquainted with the most material circumstances of the case against Tallien and his associates. D'Ossonville had acted against the triumvirate (Robespierre, St. Just, Couthon) before Tallien declared himself. He appears to have been blameless in his conduct while employed by the committee; for, with all the opportunities which he had of serving the profligate chiefs of the conflicting factions, by ministering to their cruel propensities, and of benefiting himself by showing partiality to persons accused, no accusation was ever brought, hardly any complaint made against him till the Tallien party, aware of his possessing proofs fatal to them of malversation as well as of cruelty (a much more venial offence in those dismal times), attacked him in order to anticipate his testimony against themselves, and cast him into prison, but were wholly unable to substantiate any of their imputations. After a long confinement, he was released, and long survived his friend and colleague, Senart, who died in 1796, and bequeathed to him his memoirs written during his confinement. D'Ossonville made over the work in 1823 to M. Dumesnil, who published it the following year. The statements are, therefore, to be received as those of a person acquainted with the facts, but an enemy, and one smarting under the sufferings inflicted upon him by Tallien. D'Ossonville, as well as Senart, must be considered as giving the account, but both stood in the same predicament; and the testimony of both is subject to the same exception.

Tallien is, by those persons as well as others, accused of having been concerned in schemes, to a certain extent successful, for manufacturing forged assignats, as well as other acts of more ordinary peculation, such as refusing to render any account of large sums entrusted to him by the Government, and

making away with the valuable property seized at the pillage of the Tuileries and the Garde Meubile. His participation in the September massacres is distinctly affirmed, with a statement of the author's knowledge of the particulars having been officially obtained. The instructions given to the chief conductors of the carnage are stated to have been found after the infamous Maillard's death, and with Tallien's name, among others, signed by himself. It is well known that the books of the municipality contain entries of money paid to the assassins; those of the sections, Jardin des Plantes and Unitè, give the names of the men who received payment; and the general register gives a sum of 1,463 francs as paid on the 6th of September to three of the murderers, who had executed the orders for preserving "la salubrité de l'air pendant les journeés de Septembre." We may, therefore, easily suppose that Tallien and his accomplices scrupled not to sign the instructions issued by them.

From the time of his election to the Convention, he had continued in the same extreme course which he had before pursued; and had become one of the most violent and unscrupulous of the Mountain. He bore a forward part in the insurrection of 31st May and 2d June, by which the Commune overpowered the Convention, and compelled it to rescind the vote passed a few days before, appointing the Commission of Twelve. On this occasion, the mob actually took the place of the members, whom, by threats of instant death, they had driven away; and though the resolutions thus passed were next day repealed, the renewed threats forced the Assembly to restore the resolutions, and also to arrest the whole of the Gironde leaders, who were forthwith put to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Tallien was, certainly, the person who chiefly brought about these most disgraceful proceedings; and caused, by the terrors of mob violence, the Convention to sacrifice the most respectable portion of its members, and

in whose favour it was known to be disposed by a clear majority of votes.

For this service to the Jacobin chiefs, whose supremacy it secured, he was rewarded with the mission to Bordeaux, where his profligacy and cruelty combined, proved even too much for his masters to bear. It may easily be admitted that Carrier at Nantes, and Lebon at Arras, surpassed him; and there seems no reason to doubt that Billaud, Collôt, and Fouché, at Lyons, Barras and Freron at Marseilles, committed a much greater number of murders, though the accusers of Tallien have always placed his Proconsulship upon a level with theirs. But, after all such deductions are made, there remains enough to stamp him with a greater infamy than any one incurred save those seven above named. Like Lebon, he had the guillotine placed in sight of his windows, and took a pleasure in witnessing its operation. He avowedly made it an instrument of taxation, as well as of vengeance, declaring to his employers that it might be estimated as likely to produce the sum of forty millions. He suffered money to be openly taken by his commissioners for the liberation of persons arrested or accused. He reversed at his pleasure the sentences of the tribunals; hired mobs to insult the victims ordered for execution; led a life of ostentatious immorality; aggravated the sufferings of his victims by superadding cruel treatment to their capital punishment; outraged common decency by the language he constantly used in reference to their treatment,—language more befitting the public executioner than a representative of the Government; and plainly avowing that he made war by the guillotine against the wealthy and the moderate, as well as against the adversaries of the Republic, he called down upon him the execrations of the whole community, while reflecting persons, far from regarding his youth as affording an extenuation of his enormities, were the more shocked to find such

hardness of heart, such maturity of crime, in one who had barely attained his twenty-fourth year. The Committee of Public Safety, probably informed of his proceedings, and their evil tendency, for the credit of the Government, by their emissary, Julien,* recalled him summarily, and made him their enemy. He intrigued with the members of the Committee who took part against the Triumvirate; and he who had never found any fault with the wholesale murders of Billaud, Freron, Fouché, was the principal leader in the revolution of Thermidor, the only avowed ground of which was the refusal of Robespierre to close the proscription. But both he and his associates acted entirely under the influence of their personal fears, from having discovered that the Triumvirate's measures of extermination would extend to them. It was certainly not true that he was the chief cause of the Thermidor Revolution, as he always pretended, for others, and especially some in the Committee, had taken the step, and formed a junction with the moderate party; but he came forward in the Convention at a critical moment, and thus had the appearance of leading the movement.

The success of the proceeding secured his escape from the punishment which his crimes had so well deserved; but it did more; it gave him greater weight in the Convention. This influence he retained by acting as a chief of the Thermidorean party; and he was sent to represent the Convention, with Hoche, at the time of the Quiberon expedition. That his old habits recurred after an interval of moderation is certain; for, on his return from his mission, he urged the most cruel proceedings against the unhappy captives, the emigrants taken after the failure of their descent upon the coast. He obtained decrees by which they were

* The *Papiers de Robespierre* gives many letters and reports of Julien's, but suppresses everything, or almost everything, unfavourable to Tallien. The selection was made by Tallien's party after 9th Thermidor.

put to death, and not only the men, but women and children, who were found among their numbers.

The times were, however, now materially changed since those cruel scenes, in which he had borne so large a part; and, with the return of more moderate and humane councils, his influence rapidly disappeared. All his attempts at resisting the violent proceedings of the Mountain signally failed; and he became a neglected member of the Council of Five Hundred, until he followed Napoleon in his expedition to Egypt. He was taken by an English cruiser on his return from thence; and received some exceedingly ill-judged attentions from the Whig party in London. In France his character was entirely gone; and he lived only in such society as he could command by the ample fortune of his wife, the daughter of a wealthy French banker settled at Madrid, and with whom he had become acquainted during her first marriage, while residing at Bordeaux. Their divorce in 1802 reduced him to great pecuniary distress; and Napoleon, always suspicious of those who had taken part in the times of the Jacobins, but having, from accidental circumstances, formed a much less unfavourable opinion of Robespierre than the facts warranted, treated Tallien with marked coldness upon all occasions. When, however, in his extreme difficulties, he solicited some employment, he was appointed Consul at Alicant, where he lingered for many years; and, returning to Paris in bad health, died in 1820, without fortune, or friends, or respect, public or private; a neglect, a contempt well deserved, by the utterly unprincipled course of his whole life.

Most of the other actors in the dreadful scenes of the Revolution, some even among the worst of them, had to plead, in extenuation of their crimes, the having been under the influence of vehement feelings how exaggerated soever, of something like zeal how misguided soever, of something like opinions having the

semblance of principles—while such wretches as Carrièr, Marat, Lebon, seemed to be sheltered under a doubt of their sanity. But Tallien shares with Barras and one or two others, the distinction of having throughout acted without the shadow of a principle, with a fixed, deliberate, calculating design, of seeking his own interest first, his safety afterwards, and sacrificing to his selfish gratification every social duty and every humane feeling.

He is distinguished from some, perhaps many, of the great criminals of whom we have been making mention, in another particular. Their natures originally virtuous, of some even amiable, were perverted by the contagious phrenzy of the times. Of Danton and Camilles Desmoulins, this may safely be asserted; but it is believed that even Lebon was originally of a kindly disposition, and others far less guilty had undergone a similar change; while the contrast which still more of them presented of good conduct in their domestic relations to the atrocity of their public acts, is more remarkable than in any other passage of history, and seems to countenance the supposition that these proceeded from a morbid condition, superinduced by the accidents of the day. Of Tallien nothing whatever is known that does him honour at any period of his life, or in any of its relations. Like Robespierre, he was from the first wholly unamiable and thoroughly selfish, with the hardness of heart that makes deeds of cruelty, not indeed as to the Carrièrs and Marats, positively acceptable, but at least altogether indifferent, and willingly adopted as the means of reaching the object in view. Seasons of unbridled anarchy, and the absolute power which they engender, enable such persons to gratify their innate evil propensities, as they corrupt and pervert the better nature of others. The contemplation of the effects thus produced, should make all men most averse, not only to violent but to rapid changes in the established institutions of their country,—those insti-

tutions the result of experience, and to which popular habits have long been accommodated—and should make them satisfy themselves that the evils they would remove are extreme, before exposing society to the hazards of the remedy.

NEY.

If we look among the leaders who have made themselves famous in the wars of the Revolution, for those most distinguished by the want of principle, as Tallien was among the leaders in civil life, there can be little hesitation in pitching upon Marshal Ney. In one respect, indeed, the parallel altogether fails: he stood at the head of his profession for some great qualities—the courage which gave him the name of *Bravest of the Brave*, and a power of manœuvring troops in the field, which, as far as regards bodies actually in sight and within a moderate compass, is said to have never been surpassed. Tallien was only remarkable as a third-rate speaker, an active agitator, and a successful mob-leader, if we consider his profession to have been that of a statesman. So far the military man stands far, indeed, above the civil; but in flagrant want of principle, they stand upon a level, and are distinguished from all their fellows. In his conduct towards Napoleon, Augereau comes nearest to Ney; but with this material difference, that he had grievances of which to complain, and of which he had loudly complained before the abdication, when his unfeeling insolence, his coarse personal rudeness towards his fallen general, as he met him upon his way to Elba, excited universal disgust, and made men recollect the base origin from which he had risen to command. Ney, on the other hand, whose great merit had raised him from as humble a station, never received from his master anything but the greatest kindness, and he was the first of his marshals to leave him, and take promotion from the

restored family. Upon the marvellous progress the year after, from his landing at Cannes, Ney, in taking leave of the King, pledged himself to bring him prisoner in an iron cage. He next day marched at the head of an army, and before the week was out, he carried that army over to the Emperor. In his address to it, he had the incredible effrontery to declare that the liberty —"the sacred cause of French liberty and national independence could no longer suffer the continuance of the Bourbons and their followers; that they wished to sink the military glory of the country, and it signified not what became of them, whether they emigrated or remained in France forgotten." After the pledge the week before to the Bourbon Monarch as his lawful Sovereign, whose troops he was by his own choice entrusted to command, this proclamation might well excite incredulous astonishment. To make the whole complete, it only wanted that he should promise to arrest that Sovereign and deliver him into the usurper's hands. That usurper had much to overlook in his former conduct. Among the causes of the reverses in the Peninsula, there can be no doubt that Ney's unprincipled selfishness was next to our great captain's genius, the chief. His insubordination, his quarrels with other generals, his conduct, so glaring as to require his being removed from command on one occasion—all give the reader of M. Thiers' admirable work the worst opinion of Ney. And no one who had marked his course in that important struggle could be much surprised at any want of principle afterwards displayed.

During the Waterloo campaign he showed if possible more strongly than ever that courage in the field which he possessed more than all others; but both the day before the great battle and in the course of it, his errors were such as seriously affected the result, although he fought with the courage of despair. The not executing the order to seize Quatre Bras (on 15th) till

the day after, and a premature movement on the 18th which exposed the cavalry to a concentrated fire of all the allied artillery, have been accounted of great importance in deciding the fortune of that memorable day. Be this, however, as it may, his moral courage failed him after the defeat as it so often did in the Peninsula; and again he was the first to leave Napoleon and to declare that the Bourbons must be recalled. He added that he should retire to the United States; but he deemed it better to remain and take his chance of forgiveness. Until, however, he saw what course the restored government would pursue respecting him, he thought it safest to remain in concealment at the country house of a relation. He was there discovered by an accident, handed over by the prefect to the police, tried by the Chamber of Peers, and condemned to be shot as a traitor, after a full hearing of his case, which rested entirely upon the construction of an article in the treaty "protecting persons who were in Paris on the 8th July from being prosecuted for their conduct or political opinions in their functions." That this meant persons holding offices seemed plain enough; that no one for acting or having acted in these offices, however hostile to the restored family, could be prosecuted, was admitted; but that it could protect a person from the consequences of a gross act of treason should seem as untenable a position as that a clerk in the Treasury should be protected from the consequences of a forgery or an embezzlement—though doubtless he could not be charged with disaffection in advancing money to the Emperor.

The most groundless complaints were made of the Duke of Wellington for his not having interfered to prevent Ney's execution. This he could by no possibility have done except on the ground of humanity; for the question belonged exclusively to the French Government, and it had been

dealt with according to the law and the constitution of France. The Duke could only have asked for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy because a great warrior, wholly undeserving of respect in any other capacity, had been condemned for as odious a crime as ever was brought to punishment; and if, on grounds of humanity, he was called upon to interpose for Ney, in how many other cases of treasonable practices and proceedings might he not also, but with more justice, have been appealed to, where the conduct impeached was attended with none of the same aggravating circumstances which, in Ney's case, revolted all men? As for his having any duty, or the very least right, to interpose in the construction of the article of the convention, it could not for a moment be thought of. Such a course would have been one of mere insolence, and, indeed, wrong towards the French government, and would have committed his own with that government and with the nation. His feeling towards individuals was shown in a remarkable manner on the morning of Waterloo; and the fact should be borne in mind by all who doubt of his humanity in the case now adverted to. When Napoleon passed within range of an English battery where the Duke was, and the officers were about to fire at the group, he at once and peremptorily forbade it. This passage in his illustrious and unstained life is worth a thousand superfluous panegyrics, and puts to flight all imputations upon him as wanting in those feelings which, in the company of more rare and stern qualities, are ever found to adorn the character of the greatest men.

BRISSOT.—THE GIRONDINS.

THERE are not many more striking contrasts than Brissot presents to the personage whose character and conduct we have been engaged in describing.* But the contemplation of this great diversity is not merely gratifying our curiosity; a most important lesson is to be drawn from it—the almost equal amount of injury to the interests of society occasioned by men generally virtuous,—at least acting according to their principles, but having formed erroneous opinions, or from enthusiasm, carrying right opinions to a perilous excess—and by men having no principles whatever except the promoting of their own interests, the gratification of their own selfish propensities. Compared with Tallien —Brissot, Vergniaud, Condorcet, were honest and conscientious men. Without any such comparison, Roland and his wife were honest—actuated by pure and virtuous motives, how mistaken soever in some particulars, how blameable soever in their unreflecting zeal for the success of their views. Yet it cannot be doubted that more wide-spreading and more lasting mischief was done by the great party of which these eminent persons were the leaders than by Tallien himself, even if we do not make an abatement from the censure justly bestowed upon him, by setting off against his crimes the important service rendered in so materially aiding the overthrow of the Robespierre tyranny. That Brissot and his associates were free from guilt in seeking the triumph of their opinions, often blind to the

* Tallien.

consequences of the course they took towards that object, can in no wise be affirmed. But their honest errors are so mixed up with their faults, that we can only pronounce a mitigated sentence against them, especially when we view the far more flagrant guilt of other factions. Their history is well fitted to inculcate the necessity of those who meddle with public affairs, above all of those who are given to change, to carefully examine the tendency of the principles on which they proceed, and most scrupulously to abstain from all sacrifice of the immediate interests of the community to the success of these principles, upon the speculation that temporary evil may bring about lasting good.

Brissot was the son of a person in humble station, a pastry-cook at Ouarville, a small village near Chartrés, who made an effort to give him an education that might fit him to be an advocate. But he became a literary man, and having distinguished himself by the publication of one or two works on jurisprudence, which had considerable merit and great success, especially his Theory of Criminal Law, and having given umbrage to the authorities by the liberal and philanthropic doctrines which he maintained, and probably also by a journey to England, where he became acquainted with some political characters of distinction, an unfounded suspicion made him be supposed the author of a seditious publication, and he was for some time confined in the Bastile. He was soon liberated, but upon the condition of giving up the journal which he had established, the *Lycées de Londres;* but he soon after published letters to the Emperor Joseph upon the 'Right of Emigration and Insurrection,' occasioned by the troubles in Wallachia, and a work upon the 'Importance of the American Revolution to the Happiness of France.' It may easily be imagined that these publications still further lessened the goodwill of the government towards him; and he

even heard of a Lettre de Cachet being issued, on the supposition of his having written a pamphlet since, known to have been Clavierè's. He escaped, however, and took refuge, first in England, then in America, until the Revolution brought him back, well prepared by all that had passed respecting him, to take an active part in the struggle now going on. It must be added, to his honour, that he had before his flight been distinguished as one of the founders of the *Amis des Noirs;* and, although it is well known that his opinions on the subject of Negro slavery originated in his hatred of the aristocratic classes, among whom the Planters chiefly were, and that his views on the subject were not more correct than those of the Abbe Gregoire, who defended Catholic Emancipation as "the friend of freedom for persons of all colours;" yet it is, perhaps, well to follow Mr. Stephen's rule, of being thankful for all support to a good cause without inquiring too minutely even into the motives, still less into the arguments, of our adherents. This was his answer to those who charged Napoleon, on his return from Elba with his Abolition Decree, as acting the hypocrite and only looking to the support he might gain for himself and the mischief he might do his adversaries—an appeal which seemed naturally enough made to Mr. Stephen after his urging the war against Napoleon as the oppressor of the St. Domingo peasantry and the murderer of their emperor. But he certainly did not form a very exalted estimate either of Napoleon's virtue or of Gregoire's and Brissot's discrimination, much as he might rejoice in the course they all three pursued.

On his arrival in France, Brissot at once joined the party which were inclined to strong revolutionary measures. He set up a paper, *Le Patriote Français*, and was chosen a member of the Municipal Council first established at Paris under the new law of corporations, and he was charged to receive for the city, the keys of

the Bastile from the hands of the victorious insurgents. On the meeting of the Legislative Assembly, in which none of the Constituante were by law allowed to sit, he was elected among the deputies for Paris; he immediately took his seat on the extreme left, and distinguished himself by his great violence against the Court upon all questions that arose. A severe law against emigrants was the somewhat inconsistent work of the author of the 'Letters to the Emperor Joseph;' the other doctrine of that letter, however,—the right of insurrection—he in nowise departed from; and the great object of him and his colleagues, the Gironde party, was the overthrow of the monarchy—to be attempted by every possible means. Unhappily for their country and for their species, as well as for their own fame, they considered the most certain of those means to be the plunging France into war with the monarchies of Europe. Brissot's invectives against the emigration had not been received with more enthusiasm by the mob of the Assembly, than was his announcement soon after, that war was declared against the Emperor; and as Deputy from the Committee of General Safety of the Convention early in the following year, he laid before that body the statement which produced, as it was intended, the Declaration of war against England and the Stadtholder. The Jacobin party was steady in its resistance to these fatal errors, if we are not rather to call them crimes, of the Girondins, who hoped by those dreadful measures at once to destroy the monarchical government and extinguish the power of the rival faction.

But, between the Declaration against the German powers, and that against England and Holland, there had intervened most important events, which displayed in a still more remarkable manner the inconsistencies and the incapacity of this party. The events of 20th June and 10th August had occurred: and between those two days, he who had always been the advocate

of a republic, and the enemy of the Court, astonished the Assembly by declaring himself entirely averse to a proceeding for dethroning the king, as premature. His speech was received with great disapprobation, and his influence was believed to be gone. But, on the 10th of August he took part with the anti-Royalists; and during the short period that remained of the Legislative Assembly, and afterwards in the Convention, he appeared to have regained the ground which he had lately lost. It must be observed, however, that the Girondins as a party did not approve this gross inconsistency of Brissot and some of their leaders. They were for the measure of dethroning the king, but desired that it should be the work of the Assembly; their adversaries were resolved that it should be the doing of the Commune or the multitude out of doors; forcing the Assembly to act against its own opinions and wishes. In all that followed there appears to have been no material difference between the views of Brissot and the other Girondins. Nor could anything be more despicable than their conduct. They had a large majority of the Legislative Assembly favourable to their opinions. Even in the Convention they had the control. Their adversaries had only the mob with them; but this, especially the terror of the Commune, was quite sufficient to make their minority prevail upon all essential questions. However, upon the trial of the king, the Girondins must have succeeded had they acted with ordinary firmness, nay, with common sense. They were as anxious to save the king's life as to secure his dethronement; and yet they suffered their dread of the people, bent as they knew upon his destruction, to prevent them from voting according to their consciences; they were afraid they should be accused of Royalist feelings or principles. Hence they were induced, some by the taunts, some by the persuasion of the Jacobin party, to join in the general vote, first that he should be brought to trial, and then after

the case was closed, that he was guilty—a decision unanimously pronounced by the Convention, although a clear majority were probably of a contrary opinion, and certainly were against the capital sentence immediately after given. The expectation held out to the Girondins that if they joined in this vote, and if a capital punishment was decreed, there should be a stay of the execution until the country at large could be appealed to, was believed to have turned the balance; for forty of the party who were known to abhor that extremity, joined in the vote, and only six-and-twenty was the majority by which the condemnation was carried. But as the appeal had been negatived by a majority of three to two after the general vote of guilty, this explanation of their conduct seems inconsistent with all probability, as no degree of folly could ever have made those whom such an expectation had induced to join in the unanimous vote, repeat the same error upon the assumption that the decree against the appeal would be reversed. Nothing but a deprivation of reason could account for such a proceeding. How strange and unaccountable soever, it is yet certain that many of the party in giving their votes for the capital sentence, added "avec le sursis." These, and the party generally, acted with the greatest weakness, the most glaring inconsistency; but the excuse of mental alienation they had not, unless the allowing fear to master their reason deserves that name. Their fear, too, was political, rather than personal; for the greater number of their chiefs met death with perfect calmness. The question of the *sursis* was put after the sentence, and negatived by a far less majority than, from the vote on the appeal, might have been expected.

When we consider their conduct as a party, it is impossible to deny that it was more to be despised than that of the others composing the moderate or constitutional minority, and who, contrary to their

principles, allowed themselves to be driven by the mob out of doors to siding with their Jacobin adversaries, because these had never so strongly expressed their opinions against the course they then pursued. No more eloquent speech was ever made in any assembly than Vergniaud's against the execution, vehemently assailing the whole proceedings of the Mountain, and more especially those of their allies, the mob, to overawe the Convention. Yet Vergniaud not only joined in the unanimous vote of guilty, but even voted for the punishment of death, adding only the miserable qualification, that he hoped the Convention would respite the execution, after a large majority had declared that appeal there should be none, (and without appeal the *sursis* could have no rational meaning); and then, notwithstanding this qualification, to the astonishment of all he actually voted against the *sursis*. It is to be observed on this question of appeal to the primary assemblies, (and the *sursis* involved it), that there is great difficulty in supposing its supporters were in earnest, because they must have known that such an appeal was a sentence of civil war upon the whole country. This view of the subject in all probability was Napoleon's, when he expressed himself with such unmeasured contempt of the Girondins, manifestly blaming them more than the Jacobins for the king's fate, and justly ascribing to their weakness and selfish party tactics the success of the latter, and the reign of terror which followed their victory. How much more manly was the conduct of those, how much soever we may abhor it, who voted for the capital sentence at once, and without such wretched pretences of mercy! Compared to the Vergniauds, the Fonfredes, the Buzots, the Guadets, the Jacobins themselves rise into something like a respectable position. Compared with their conduct, that of the Rolands, the Lanjuinais, and the Condor-

cets, is entirely to be approved; they were decidedly adverse to the extreme course; whatever hand they originally had in the measures which produced the catastrophe, they at least shrunk from its near approach, and had not the pitiful meanness of confessing their repugnance and yet embracing the course they hated, with a pretence which they felt to be hollow, that it would not end in what they knew must be the fatal result.

This party, once so powerful, now fell into general contempt, which prepared the way for the cruel fate of its leaders. That contempt succeeded to the great respect and influence which it originally enjoyed, from the eminent talents and brilliant accomplishments of its chiefs, their sincere devotion to their principles, their exemption from the reckless violence of their adversaries, which made them by comparison pass for being more virtuous than they really were, perhaps also for having greater moderation. The same unfavourable opinion of them has been confirmed by the more calm and deliberate judgment of after times. The very defences which have been made of their conduct are as various and contradictory as the subject of them. While some maintain that they were only republicans in despair of a constitutional monarchy standing its ground; others contend that they were only Royalists in despair of having a republic. But the former class of advocates forget that Brissot, among others, declared for a republic at a time when the Jacobins themselves deemed such a course premature, and that the Gironde deputies, in 1791, before they set out for Paris, bound themselves by an oath to subvert the monarchy; and the latter class forget that they proposed at one time to make the avowal of republican designs a capital offence. In truth, they had no solidly fixed opinions except an ardent love of freedom and political improvement, and a resolution to establish the rule of the middle classes upon the ruins

of the privileged orders in church and state. But with great eloquence, considerable learning, and indefatigable zeal, they were singularly deficient in the qualities which fit men for action, above all, in determined resolution—the strong will that looks to the object in view neglecting all other considerations—the entire devotion to its attainment, neglecting all petty considerations. This is peculiarly required in those who would bear sway in revolutionary times, and according as it is accompanied with right feelings, and guided by honest intentions, or is without such companions and guides, that determined character becomes a blessing or a curse to mankind. But the history of the Girondins proves that the feelings and the intentions may exist comparatively pure, and the want of determination, the deficiency in strong and fixed will, may produce almost as great public mischief as the want of all honest principle, and the perversion of all humane feeling. Their errors did as much harm as the crimes of other men. Even if we allow them to have only erred from misguided enthusiasm—if we acquit them of all selfish, that is, all ambitious views—if we hold them exempt from blame, unless for weakness and imprudence—this large and gratuitous admission avails little to their defence. For when the peace of the world, the happiness of mankind is at stake, they are criminally answerable for the result of their well-intentioned weakness, who assume forward places without the firmness of purpose that can alone make their elevation safe for society; they deserve the same reprobation that is justly visited upon the commander whose want of courage occasions the destruction of his troops. The offence is not the failure of his nerves; but the undertaking a duty which he was not sure that they would enable him to perform.

That the Girondins were under the entire dominion of party principles, is as certain as that they were

deplorably deficient in the qualities which fit men for acting in party connexion. They were bent upon the joint possession of place and power, but incapable of the self-denial, and the sacrifice of individual predilections which such common action requires. That they thus failed in their design, therefore, is no proof that they did not entertain it. "L'ambition de pouvoir,"* says Madame de Staël, "se mêlait à l'enthousiasme des principes chez les Républicains de 1792; et quelques-uns d'entre eux offrirent de maintenir la Royautè si toutes les places du ministère étaient donneés à leurs amis. Dans ce cas seulement disaient-ils, nous serons sûrs que les opinions des patriotes triompheront." A very able writer,† but whose opinions lean decidedly against the Girondins, if not inclined towards their adversaries, remarks that this passage goes direct to the address of Vergniaud, Gensonné, and Guadet, and the rest of the party, and he breaks out into a strain of which no one can deny the power; nor does the author incur any just charge of either perverting the facts, or exaggerating the inferences from them; while he certainly in the first sentence gives a warning which cannot too deeply be impressed upon speculative dealers in revolution and measures leading to it. "Imprudents! ils ignoraient donc le danger de jouer ainsi avec des principes comme les enfants avec des armes meurtrières!‡ Mais une dure expérience vint bientôt leur apprendre qu'il n'est pas permis de monter à l'assaut des *portefeuilles*, en s'appuyant d'une main sur la republique, et de l'autre sur la monarchie. Vainement, plus tard, lorsque la république, aura êté décréteé, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Guadet, se déclareront

* Revolution Française.

† M. Charles Emanuel, vol. viii. p. 8, Ph. Le Bas, Dict. Encyclopédique de l'Histoire de France.

‡ "Thoughtless men, and blind to the danger of playing with principles; like that of children playing with firearms!"

républicains, et céderont à l'influence de ceux de leurs collègues qui ont toujours nourri des sentiments démocratiques; toutes leurs protestations seront inutiles, on ne voudra plus les croire. Eux mêmes ne pourront jamais se dépouiller de leurs anciennes illusions, et de leur vieux scepticisme: ils seront républicains un jour, royalistes le lendemain; lorsqu'il sera déjà trop tard ils retourneront à la democratie, mais à une démocratie provinciale; enfin, leurs amis ne reculeront pas devant la révolte, et alors les émigrés, les absolutistes, toutes les espèces de contre-révolutionaires viendront prêter secours au fédéralisme armé. Alors aussi la république frappera indistinctement tous ses ennemis, et confondra, dans une même réprobation, des hommes qui peut-être n'ont jamais eu deux idées communes."

The allusion here made to federalism touches one of the grand charges against this party in the eyes of all republicans, but it may be said of Frenchmen generally. The Girondins were imbued with all the jealousy of the great commercial town to which their principal leaders belonged. They set themselves against the preponderance of the capital, and would have some share of power in the administration of affairs given to Bordeaux; but unable, of course, thus to restrict their extension, they would have the other great towns, as Marseilles, Lyons, Toulouse, share in the authority too much and too long usurped by Paris. There can be no doubt whatever, that this usurpation has been from the very beginning of the Revolution down to our own times the greatest detriment to France; it has been the chief source of all the calamities that have afflicted the country. But the remedy proposed by the Bordeaux or Gironde party, would only have added to the evil the calamity of civil war, and the probability of foreign conquest. The only safe check to the preponderance, the tyranny of Paris, would have been the occasional removal of

the legislature to some other town, not to a city like Bordeaux, Lyons, or Marseilles, but some place where the mob could not interfere to overawe its deliberations. The Girondins would have had a systematic removal, not an occasional change. The interests of the party had their share in this opinion, as in most of their doctrines; and it was not without some reason that Camille Desmoulins applied the term *autocracy* to their general principle or rule of conduct. Nor can the picture drawn of them by the same able artist cited above be deemed, though highly coloured, anything like a caricature. Its subject is the individual chiefs rather than the party, but it represents both:—

"Vrais enfants du midi, plus diserts que profonds, plus passionés qu'energiques; aimant beaucoup la France, mais aimant encore plus leur province, franchement revolutionaires, mais un peu matérialistes, un peu sceptiques, un peu Gascons; discutant beaucoup et n'agissant presque jamais; entraînant la majorité par le prestige de leur parole, empruntant à d'autres les idées qu'ils faisaient triompher, et se laissant trop conduire par des intrigues dont ils ignorèrent le véritable but; justement fiers de l'éloquence de Vergniaud, de Guadet, de Gensonné, mais n'ayant vu sortir de leurs rangs aucun chef capable de diriger la Révolution; car Vergniaud, malgré quelques qualités qui rappellaient Mirabeau; Gensonné malgré son habilité diplomatique; Guadet malgré son caractère résolu, formaient un triumvirat parlementaire beaucoup plus qu'un triumvirat politique, et se trompèrent presque toujours dans le choix de leurs moyens d'action; orateurs enfin plus qu'hommes d'état, et tellement personels (nous ne disons pas dans leur système, ils n'en avaient pas) que dans leurs idées, l'intérêt du pays ne passait qu'après le leur, et qu'ils preféraient le soin de leur propre gloire—même à la Gironde."*

* Dict. Encyc. viii. 811.

How little they were disposed to act in common may be gathered from almost every part of their history. But on the great occasion of the King's trial, it might have been expected that they would pursue a common course, and take the same merciful view which guided some as soon as it was found that so many were averse to the extreme course. But nothing could be more various than their conduct. Lanjuinais opposed the trial altogether, and then voted for imprisonment, but only for that if two-thirds were agreed. Condorcet voted for the severest punishment not capital; Louvet for death and *sursis* until the people accepted the constitution. Gensonnè voted for death and against the *sursis*, but he supported the appeal. Brissot and Vergniaud for death with the *sursis*, after supporting the appeal; Buzot, Fonfrede, Guadet, Isnard, for death, and against both *sursis* and appeal.

If Brissot was in some respects superior to most of the party, he fully partook of their distinguishing defect, want of determination and gross inconsistency. His speech, 26th July, against the *déchéance* after the 20th June, has been referred to as filling every one with wonder; as did his immediately afterwards taking part with the violence of 10th August; and he who had joined Condorcet in declaring for a republic at a time when the Jacobins themselves were not prepared for it, proposed soon after to make the declaration in favour of republic a capital offence. It seemed as if, with all his honesty of purpose, all his strong political feelings, he belonged to the class of party combatants who take one line only because their adversaries take the other, and thus allow their opponents to choose their principles for them.

The charge against him of intriguing with Egalité, and lending himself to the measure of a Regency during the unfortunate dauphin's minority, is probably

groundless. But that he was prone to indirect courses for the purpose of obtaining his object, whether the furtherance of his opinions or the success of his party, there seems no reason to doubt; and this it was that got him the character of an intriguer, and gave the Girondins, of whom he was the acknowledged leader, the name of "Les Intriguants." His melancholy fate certainly shut men's eyes to his failings, and led to the friendly supposition that he only erred from misguided enthusiasm, with no greater fault than want of firmness and resolution.

He and his colleagues suffered from the prevalence of that mob influence of which they had formerly availed themselves: their fall was entirely brought about by the multitude excited against them and against the Convention, as they had before excited it against the Crown and the Court. After their weakness, their inconsistencies, and their divisions among themselves had brought them into general contempt, though they still had a majority quite sufficient to save them, and even to give them the victory over the Jacobins, the Parisians—that is, the Commune, and their hired mob, indignant at the prospect of transferring the sittings of the Convention behind the Loire, rose upon the Assembly, compelled it to rescind the vote of the day before, and forced it to arrest the one-and-twenty Girondin chiefs and send them to the Revolutionary Tribunal for trial, that is, for condemnation. Some escaped the decree and fled to Rouen, where General Wimpfen made a vain attempt to raise the country in their defence. Others reached Bordeaux, and were cherished by the kindness of friends. A very few escaped altogether; some, as Roland, Condorcet, and Guadet, voluntarily put an end to their lives; others perished in the forests. Brissot having resisted at first all the persuasions of his friends to fly, at length yielded to them, but was taken on the way. He met death,

as did all those of his colleagues who remained to take their trial, with steady and with calm courage; and left the mournful reflection that if he had shown the same resolution in former periods of his life, as he did at its close, not only his tragical fate would have been averted, but his country would have escaped from most of the dreadful scenes which soon followed.

FRENCH BAR DURING THE REVOLUTION.

It is impossible to give too much honour to the noble conduct of the French Bar during those dismal times of which we have been contemplating the story. With but few exceptions, and these described by enemies, they did their duty in defending the victims of the Committee and the Convention, with a courage which, although too often ineffectual to the rescue of their clients, covered themselves with glory. There have often been inferences drawn from thence in favour of the revolutionary tyrants; and I have heard many men entirely averse to them, like M. Gallois, as well as those more inclined in their favour like General Carnôt and M. Lakanal, affirm that freedom of speech was allowed, and that the advocate thus exposed himself to less hazard than might be supposed. This observation does not seem warranted by the circumstances. The precautions taken to secure condemnation by the Revolutionary Tribunal, both from the choice of the jurors, and after a little while from the execrable law empowering the court to close the discussion, and condemn summarily, made it a matter of no great consequence to the government whether the advocate was fully heard or not, as far as the event of the trial was concerned; while the effects of his eloquence in ordinary cases, could not excite so much interest among the audience as to endanger the authority of those whom, first the mob and afterwards the Convention under its control persisted in supporting. But when persons were put upon their trial against whom the public interest was strongly roused,

the tyrants of the hour ran some risk from the fearless discharge of professional duty, and the advocate was in the same proportion exposed to personal danger. It is such cases that we are chiefly required to consider.

The name of Lamoignon de Malesherbes at once rises to our recollection in surveying this distinguished list. His noble defence of Louis XVI. is closely associated with the tragical fate of that prince, and is never separated from it. He was then in his sixty-third year, and had been not more renowned in his profession both at the Bar and on the Bench, than for his strong resistance to the usurpation of the crown upon the parliament over one branch of which he presided. Louis XV. had felt the weight of his influence, and punished him by exile for his opposition when he abolished the parliament, towards the end of his inglorious and profligate reign. When his unfortunate successor recalled the parliament, Malesherbes resumed his office of President of the Cour des Aides. He had before shown himself friendly to the privileges of the press; and he now pursued with the additional influence, arising from his increased popularity, various important improvements in the judicial system, and the reform of some glaring abuses. He became the colleague of Turgôt; and when that enlightened and virtuous minister was dismissed, he considered himself bound in honour to give in his resignation. He occupied himself in his retirement with the composition of several valuable works on moral and political subjects; and in order to extend his information on practical affairs, he made journeys through France, Holland, and Switzerland, on foot, that he might more closely study the manners, the habits, and the condition of the people. On his return to Paris in 1787, he was again called to resume his office under the King; but finding the state of the government such that his counsels were not listened

to, he retired from a position which gave him no prospect of being useful.

The rest of his history is too well known. After in vain attempting by his judgment and his skill to save the King, whom from ancient attachment he had volunteered to defend, or rather to preside over his defence; he faithfully and affectionately clung to him to the last, and was rewarded for the undaunted firmness with which he had given expression to his feelings of affection for his royal client, and abhorrence of his persecutors, by being arrested among the first of the victims that fell before the tyrants, when their power became absolute, and their cruelty reckless. The pretext was, that an emigrant had been concealed in the country house where he lived in the utmost retirement. His trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal, was, of course, a mere mockery, as regarded the investigation and the event; but the venerable aspect of the veteran magistrate and advocate is said to have caused the judges, who dared not acquit him, to avert their eyes and conceal their faces. His daughter was tried and condemned with him according to the course of those judicial massacres; and he suffered in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

Tronçon de Coudray also nobly distinguished himself with reference to the King's trial. Target had been, with Malesherbes, chosen by him, but had declined; and Tronçon volunteered for a duty from which it seemed that others shrank. His generous offer was declined, but he was, with Chauveau-Lagarde, the defender of Marie Antoinette in the autumn of the same year. The refusal of Target has often been made the subject of severe observation. But it must be recollected that he had left the profession some years before the King's trial; and although Malesherbes was not prevented by the same circumstance from undertaking the defence, yet Target might well think that two persons in that peculiar pre-

dicament ought not to undertake so momentous a case, and Malesherbes could on no account be asked to withdraw, nor could such a thing be even indirectly hinted at. Besides, Deseze added to the number of the counsel; and it is very probable that this was on the suggestion of Target, first, because, from the part Deseze had taken during the Constituent Assembly of pronouncing a splendid panegyric on its labours in his defence of Bezeayal, whose acquittal of a charge of treason he obtained, and from his known attachment to free-thinking principles as evinced, among other things, by his pilgrimage to Fernay, it is not very likely that the King would himself have selected him; and next because Target's confidence in him is known to have been so great, as to make him on leaving the Bar, hand over to him the last cause in which he was retained—that of Helvetius's daughter.—The choice of Deseze, whether made on this suggestion or not, was a most happy one. He acted, no doubt, in accordance with, and under the direction of his leaders Malesherbes and Tronchet; but the talents and the boldness which he displayed won great applause, although the plan of the speech was the subject of criticism, which more properly might have been directed to his leaders, and which, probably, did not proceed from professional men. One expression was long remembered with universal assent, "I seek for judges among you, and I only find accusers."—The admirable peroration will long be remembered:—"Entendez d'avance l'histoire qui dira à la Renommée: Louis, monté sur le trône à vingt ans, y porta l'exemple des mœurs, la justice et l'économie; il n'y porta aucune faiblesse, aucune passion corruptrice: il fut l'ami constant du peuple. Le peuple voulut qu'un impôt désastreux fût détruit, Louis le détruisit; le peuple voulut l'abolition de la servitude, Louis l'abolit; le peuple sollicita des réformes, il les fit; le peuple voulut changer ses lois, il y consentit; le peuple voulut que des millions de Fran-

cais recouvrassent leurs droits, il les leur rendit; le peuple voulut la liberté, il la lui donna. On ne peut pas disputer à Louis la gloire d'avoir été au-devant du peuple par ses sacrifices; et c'est lui qu'on vous a proposé!.....Citoyens, je n'achève pas, je m'arrête devant l'histoire; songez qu'elle jugera votre jugement, et que le sien sera celui des siècles."—Well might his royal client exclaim as he embraced his able and courageous defender—"This is true eloquence; I am now at ease; my memory will be honoured; the French will regret my death." But the historian too truly observes—"les passions étaient sourdes et incapables de prévoyance."*

Under the execrable "*Loi des Suspects*," he was arrested some months after the King's trial, and only set free at the change of Thermidor. Napoleon had a great prejudice against him, and accused him of having entered into a conspiracy with Lainè to promote the designs of England, for overthrowing his empire by intrigues and insurrection in France. He pretended to have proofs against Lainè, and that Deseze was the medium of communication. It is needless to add that as there was no ground for suspecting the principal, the accessory could have no share in the imaginary plot.

Tronchet was by Mirabeau called the "*Nestor of the Aristocracy;*" and approached to his seventieth year when the King chose him for one of his advocates. He had distinguished himself by his professional abilities and learning, being the chief of the Bar (batonnier des avocats) at the time of the States General, to which he was elected a deputy. His feeble voice from an early period prevented him from practising in court; but no one was more consulted. His aristocratic prejudices had not prevented him from supporting some changes in the law, which he deemed essential to the

* Mignet, i. 352.

public good; and, among others, one which must be considered the most inconsistent of any with the policy he supported; he joined in promoting the abolition of the law of primogeniture, and substituting the equal division of property. When the constitution of 1790 was proposed, he said he must accept it "for want of a better;" but on condition that there should be no change during a certain succession of Legislatures. He accepted, without hesitation, the perilous office of defending the King, performed his duty fearlessly, and was forced to conceal himself until the time of the Directory, when he resumed his profession and sat in the Council of Ancients. Napoleon did justice to his talents and his character, by making him President of the Cour de Cassation, and employing him in the great work of the Code Civile.

In the defence of Marie Antoinette with Tronçon de Coudray, was joined a man of equal talent and courage, Chauveau-Lagarde. The boldness and the ability which both displayed, at a time too when the risk they ran, as well as the difficulties with which they had to contend, were so much greater than at the King's trial, have stamped their names with lasting renown. Tronçon escaped the dangers of the Reign of Terror; but having in the Council of Ancients, where he afterwards sat, showed the same firmness in the Senate that had marked him at the Bar, he was transported to Cayenne by the tyrants of the 18th Fructidor, and died there the following year. His learned and able colleague was more fortunate. After defending Miranda, Brissot, and Charlotte Corday, he was thrown into prison in consequence of the boldness of this last defence, and only liberated at the change of Thermidor.

He continued in the same distinguished course, and universally honoured both at the Bar and on the Bench, till a very recent period. I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with him a few

years before his decease, which happened in 1841; and I have known few professional men, with whom it was more profitable to discuss subjects connected with the law, independent of the great interest which his remarkable history was calculated to lend his society. The courage which he had showed in the reign of terror and under the Directory, had not abated with age; and when General Bonnaire was unjustly prosecuted in 1816, he found a zealous and able defender in the fearless advocate of those who had been persecuted in very different times. His exertions were unsuccessful; the General and his aide-de-camp were both condemned, the latter capitally, the former to be transported and cashiered; but he died a few months after of a broken heart.

It was a curious instance of the same kind of error which has been remarked in the Abbé Gregoire on the subject of Negro Slavery, that M. Chauveau, on my being presented to him, at once compared the proceeding of 1793 in Paris, with that of 1820 in London, as causes of the same kind in which we had both been engaged; and made it necessary to remind him that the principal, though not the only point of resemblance between the two cases, was there being a Queen in each.

NAPOLEON—WASHINGTON.

AFTER Lafayette had quitted the armies of the Republic, defaced by the crimes of 1792, and Carnôt himself, long the director of their marvellous achievements, and standing by his country in spite of all the excesses by which she was disfigured, had at length been driven from her side by the evil men that swayed her destinies, victory, long so familiar to the French people, was for a season estranged from them, and the period of their conquests seemed at last to have arrived. A new and yet more triumphant course was then begun, under the genius of Napoleon Buonaparte, certainly the most extraordinary person who has appeared in modern times, and to whom, in some respects, no parallel can be found, if we search the whole annals of the human race. For though the conquests of Alexander were more extensive, and the matchless character of Cæsar was embellished by more various accomplishments, and the invaders of Mexico and Peru worked their purposes of subjugation with far more scanty means, yet the military genius of Napoleon shines with a lustre peculiarly its own, or which he shares with Hannibal alone,* when we reflect that he never had to contend, like those conquerors, with adversaries inferior to himself in civilization or discipline, but won all his triumphs over hosts as well ordered and regularly marshalled and amply provided as his own.

This celebrated man was sprung from a good family

* The history of our Great Captain and statesman happily is still exempt from these inquiries. (1843.)

in Corsica, and while yet a boy fixed the attention and raised the hopes of all his connexions. In early youth his military genius shone forth; he soon gained the summit of his profession. He commanded at twenty-five a military operation of a complicated and difficult nature in Paris. Being selected for superior command by the genius of Carnôt, he rapidly led the French armies through a series of victories till then unexampled, and to which, even now, his own after-achievements can alone afford any parallel, for the suddenness, the vehemence, and the completeness of the operations. That much of his success was derived from the mechanical adherence of his adversaries to the formal rules of ancient tactics cannot be doubted; and our Wellington's campaigns would, in the same circumstances, and had he been opposed to similar antagonists, in all likelihood have been as brilliant and decisive. But in this he excels, that he always had to combat the soldiers bred in Napoleon's school; while Napoleon, for the most part, was matched against men whose inveterate propensity to follow the rules of an obsolete science, not even the example of Frederick had been able to subdue; and who were resolved upon being a second time the victims of the same obstinate blindness which had, in Frederick's days, made genius triumph over numbers by breaking through rules repugnant to common sense. It must, however, be confessed, that although this consideration accounts for the achievements of the great warrior, which else had been impossible, nothing is thus detracted from his praise, excepting that what he accomplished ceases to appear miraculous: for it was his glory never to let an error pass unprofitably to himself; nor ever to give his adversary an advantage which he could not ravish from him, with ample interest, before it was turned to any fatal account.

Nor can it be denied that when the fortune of war proved adverse, the resources of his mind were only

drawn forth in the more ample profusion. After the battle of Asperne he displayed more skill, as well as constancy, than in all his previous campaigns; and the struggle which he made in France, during the dreadful conflict that preceded his downfall, is by many regarded as the masterpiece of his military life. Nor let us forget that the grand error of his whole career, the mighty expedition to Moscow, was a political error only. The vast preparations for that campaign—the combinations by which he collected and marshalled and moved this prodigious and various force like a single corps, or a domestic animal, or a lifeless instrument in his hand — displayed, in the highest degree, the great genius alike for arrangement and for action with which he was endowed; and his prodigious efforts to regain the ground which the disasters of that campaign rescued from his grasp, were only not successful because no human power could in a month create an army of cavalry, nor a word of command give recruits the discipline of veterans. In the history of war, it is, assuredly, only Hannibal who can be compared with him; and certainly, when we reflect upon the yet greater difficulties of the Carthaginian's position—the much longer time during which he maintained the unequal contest—still more, when we consider that his enemies have alone recorded his story, while Napoleon has been his own annalist — justice seems to require that the modern should yield to the ancient commander.

The mighty operation which led to his downfall, and in which all the resources of his vast capacity as well as all the recklessness of his boundless ambition were displayed, has long fixed, as it well might, the regards of mankind, and it has not been too anxiously contemplated. His course of victory had been for twelve years uninterrupted. The resources of France had been drawn forth without stint at his command. The destruction of her liberties had not relaxed the

martial propensities of her people, nor thinned the multitudes that poured out their blood under his banners. The fervour of the revolutionary zeal had cooled, but the discipline which a vigorous despotism secures had succeeded, and the Conscription worked as great miracles as the Republic. The countless hosts which France thus sent forth, were led by this consummate warrior over all Italy, Spain, Germany; half the ancient thrones of Europe were subverted, the capitals of half her powers occupied in succession; and a monarchy was established which the existence of England and of Russia alone prevented from being universal.

But the vaulting ambition of the great conqueror at last overleapt itself. After his most arduous and perhaps most triumphant campaign, undertaken with a profusion of military resources unexampled in the annals of war, the ancient capital of the Russian empire was in his hands; yet, from the refusal of the enemy to make peace, and the sterility of the vast surrounding country, the conquest was bootless to his purpose. He had collected the mightiest army that ever the world saw; from all parts of the Continent he had gathered his forces; every diversity of blood, and complexion, and tongue, and garb, and weapon, shone along his line;—"Exercitus mixtus ex colluvione omnium gentium, quibus non lex, non mos, non lingua communis; alius habitus, alia vestis, alia arma, alii ritûs, alia sacra"*—the resources of whole provinces moved through the kingdoms which his arms held in awe; the artillery of whole citadels traversed the fields; the cattle on a thousand hills were made the food of the myriads whom he poured into the plains of Eastern Europe, where blood flowed in rivers, and the earth was whitened with men's

* "The army combined a mixture of all nations, with no law, no custom, no tongue in common; with different habits, different garb, different arms, different rites, different worship."—*Liv.* xxviii. 12.

bones: but this gigantic enterprise, uniformly successful, was found to have no object, when it had no longer an enemy to overcome, and the victor in vain sued to the vanquished for peace. The conflagration of Moscow in one night began his discomfiture, which the frost of another night completed! Upon the pomp and circumstance of unnumbered warriors—their cavalry, their guns, their magazines, their equipage—descended slowly, flake by flake, the snow of a northern night;—"Tantaque vis frigoris insecuta est, ut ex illâ miserabili hominum jumentorumque strage quum se quisque attollere ac levare vellet, diu nequiret, quia torpentibus rigore nervis, vix flectere artus poterant."* The hopes of Napoleon were blighted; the retreat of his armament was cut off; and his doom sealed far more irreversibly than if the conqueror of a hundred fields had been overthrown in battle, and made captive with half his force. All his subsequent efforts to regain the power he had lost never succeeded in countervailing the effect of that Russian night. The fire of his genius burnt, if possible, brighter than ever; in two campaigns his efforts were more than human, his resources more miraculous than before, his valour more worthy of the prize he played for—but all was vain: his weapon was no longer in his hand; his army was gone; and his adversaries, no more quailing under the sense of his superior nature, had discovered him to be vincible like themselves, and grew bold in their turn, as the Mexicans gathered courage, three centuries before, from finding that the Spaniards were subject to the accidents of mortality.

Such was this great warrior, and such was the fate on which the conqueror rushed.

It is quite certain that the mighty genius of Napoleon

* "And so great was the rigour of the cold which followed, that when of this miserable heap of prostrate men and cattle, any one would rise, it was for a long while impossible, from the nerves being stiff and torpid, and the joints scarce capable of motion."—*Liv.* xxi. 58.

was of the highest order; he was one of the greatest masters of the art of war; he is to be ranked among the generals of the highest class, if indeed there be any but Hannibal who can be placed on a level with him. To all the qualities, both in the council and in the field, which combine to form an accomplished commander, he added, what but few indeed have ever shown, an original genius: he was so great an improver on the inventions of others, that he might well lay claim to the honours of discovery. The tactics of Frederick he carried so much farther, and with such important additions, that we might as well deny to Watt the originating of the steam engine, as to Napoleon the being an inventor in military science. The great step which Frederick made was the connecting together all the operations of an extensive campaign in various quarters, and especially the moving vast bodies of troops rapidly on a given point, so as to fight his adversaries there at a certain advantage. This required a brave neglect of the established rules of tactics; it required a firm determination to despise formidable obstacles; it required an erasure of the words "difficult and impossible" from the general's vocabulary. In proportion to all the hardihood of these operations was the high merit of their author, and also the certainty of their success against the regular mechanical generals of Maria Theresa, to whom he was opposed. So much the rather are we to wonder at the successors of those generals, the produce of the same Germanic school, showing themselves as unprepared for the great extension of the Prussian system, but in the same direction, which Napoleon practised, and being as completely taken unawares by his rapid movements at Ulm, and his feints at Wagram, as their masters had been at Rosbach, at Pirna, and at Prague.

The degree in which he thus extended and improved upon Frederick's tactics was great indeed. No man

ever could bring such bodies into the field; none provide by combined operations for their support; none move such masses from various quarters upon one point; none manœuvre at one fight the thousands whom he had assembled, change his operations as the fate of the hour or the moment required, and tell with such absolute certainty the effects of each movement. He had all the knowledge in minute detail which the art of war requires; he had a perfectly accurate appreciation of what men and horses and guns can do; his memory told him, and in an instant, where each corps, each regiment, each gun was situated both in peace and war, and in what condition almost each company of his vast force was at any moment. Then he possessed the intuitive knowledge of his enemy's condition, and movements, and plans; so nicely could he unravel all conflicting accounts, and decide at once as by intuition which was true. In the field his eye for positions, distances, elevations, numbers, was quick, and it was infallible. All his generals at all times submitted their judgment to his, and without the least reluctance or hesitation, not deferring to his authority, but yielding from an absolute conviction of his superior skill; nor ever doubting, because firmly assured he was in the right. His own self-confidence was in the same proportion, and it was unerring.

Lying under some cover in fire, he would remain for an hour or two, receiving reports and issuing his orders, sometimes with a plan before him, sometimes with the face of the ground in his mind only. There he is with his watch in one hand, while the other moves constantly from his pocket, where his snuff-box or rather his snuff lies.—An aide-de-camp arrives, tells of a movement, answers shortly some questions rapidly, perhaps impatiently, put, is despatched with the order that is to solve the difficulty of some general of division. Another is ordered to attend, and sent off with directions to make some distant corps support an

operation. The watch is again consulted; more impatient symptoms; the name of one aide-de-camp is constantly pronounced; question after question is put whether any one is coming from a certain quarter; an event is expected; it ought to have happened; at length the wished-for messenger arrives.—"Eh bien! Qu'a-t-on fait là-bas?" "La hauteur est gagnée; le maréchal est là." "Qu'il tienne ferme—pas un pas de mouvement."* Another aide-de-camp is ordered to bring up the Guard. "Que le maréchal avance vers la tour en défilant par sa gauche—et tout ce qui se trouve à sa droite est prisonnier."†—Now the watch is consulted and the snuff is taken no more; the battle is over; the fortune of the day is decided; the great Captain indulges in pleasantry; nor doubts any more of the certainty and of the extent of his victory than if he had already seen its details in the bulletin.

After all, the grand secret of both Frederick's and Napoleon's successes, the movement of the masses which were to place their enemy in a disadvantageous position, appears to be, like all great improvements, sufficiently obvious; for it is founded on the very natural principle on which the modern Naval plan of Breaking the Line proceeds. If either at sea or on shore one party can place his enemy between two fires, or on any material part of his battle bring double the force to bear upon the defenders of that point, the success of the operation is certain. In order to execute such a plan on shore, a prodigious combination of military resources is required, and they only who are so amply furnished can venture to attempt it. That Napoleon had this capacity beyond other men is altogether incontestable.

* "Well! what has been done yonder?"—"The height is gained; the Marshal is there."—"Let him stand firm—not move a step."

† "Let the Marshal march upon the steeple, defiling by his left—and all on his right are his prisoners."

But his genius was not confined to war: he possessed a large capacity also for civil affairs. He saw as clearly, and as quickly determined on his course, in government as in the field. His public works, and his political reformations, especially his Code of Laws, are monuments of his wisdom and his vigour, more imperishable, as time has already proved, and as himself proudly foretold, than all his victories. His civil courage was more brilliant than his own, or most other men's, valour in the field. How ordinary a bravery it was that blazed forth at Lodi, when he headed his wavering columns across the bridge swept by the Austrian artillery, compared with the undaunted and sublime courage that carried him from Cannes to Paris with a handful of men, and fired his bosom with the desire, and sustained it with the confidence, of overthrowing a dynasty, and overwhelming an empire, by the terror of his name!

Nor were his endowments merely those of the statesman and the warrior. If he was not, like Cæsar, a consummate orator, he yet knew men so thoroughly, and especially Frenchmen, whom he had most nearly studied, that he possessed the faculty of addressing them in strains of singular eloquence,—an eloquence peculiar to himself. It is not more certain that he is the greatest soldier whom France ever produced, than it is certain that his place is high amongst her greatest writers, as far as composition or diction is concerned. Some of his bulletins are models for the purpose which they were intended to serve; his address to the soldiers of his Old Guard at Fontainebleau is a masterpiece of dignified and pathethic composition; his speech during the Hundred Days, at the Champ de Mars, beginning, "Général, Consul, Empereur, je tiens tout du Peuple,"* is to be placed amongst the most perfect pieces of simple and majestic eloquence.

* "General, Consul, Emperor—I hold all from the people."

These things are not the less true for being seldom or never remarked.

But with these great qualities of the will—the highest courage, the most easy formation of his resolutions, the most steadfast adherence to his purpose, the entire devotion of all his energies to his object—and with the equally shining faculties of the understanding by which that firm will worked—the clearest and quickest apprehension, the power of intense application, the capacity of complete abstraction from all interrupting ideas, the complete and most instantaneous circumspection of all difficulties, whether on one side, or even providently seen in prospect, the intuitive knowledge of men, and the power of mind and of tongue to mould their will to his purpose—with these qualities, which form the character held greatest by vulgar minds, the panegyric of Napoleon must close. HE WAS A CONQUEROR; HE WAS A TYRANT. To gratify his ambition—to slake his thirst of power—to weary a lust of dominion which no conquest could satiate—he trampled on Liberty when his hand might have raised her to a secure place; and he wrapt the world in flames, which the blood of millions alone could quench. By those passions, a mind not originally unkindly, was perverted and deformed, till human misery ceased to move it, and honesty, and truth, and pity, all sense of the duties we owe to God and to man, had departed from one thus given up to a single and a selfish pursuit. "Tantas animi virtutes ingentia vitia æquabant; inhumana crudelitas;* per-

* The kindliness of his nature will be denied by some; the inhuman cruelty by others: but both are correctly true. There is extant a letter which I have seen, and of which I have a fac-simile, full of the tenderest affection towards his favourite brother, to whom it was addressed, when about to be separated from him, long after he had entered on public life. It is in parts blotted with his tears, evidently shed before the ink was dry. As for his cruelty, they only can deny it who think it more cruel for a man to witness torments which he has ordered, or to commit butchery with his own hand, than to give a command which must consign thousands

fidia plusquam Punica; nihil veri, nihil sancti, nullus Deûm metus, nullum jusjurandum, nulla religio."* The death of Enghien, the cruel sufferings of Wright, the mysterious end of Pichegru, the punishment of Palm, the tortures of Toussaint,† have all been dwelt upon as the spots on his fame; because the fortunes of individuals presenting a more definite object to the mind, strike our imaginations, and rouse our feelings more than wretchedness in larger masses, less distinctly perceived. But to the eye of calm reflection, the declaration of an unjustifiable war, or the persisting in it a day longer than is necessary, presents a more grievous object of contemplation, implies a disposition more pernicious to the world, and should call down a reprobation far more severe.‡

to agony and death. If Napoleon had been called upon to witness, or with his own hand to inflict such misery, he would have paused at first—because physical repugnance would have prevailed over mental callousness. But how many minutes' reflection would it have taken to deaden the pain, and make him execute his own purpose?

* "So great excellences of mind were balanced by prodigious vices—inhuman cruelty, perfidy more than Punic; no truth, no restraint, no fear of God, no observance of oaths, no obligations of religion—."*Liv.* xxi.

† It is a gross error to charge him with the poisoning of his sick in Egypt; and his massacre of the prisoners at Jaffa is a very controverted matter. But we fear the early anecdote of his ordering an attack, with no other object than to gratify his mistress, when a young officer of artillery, rests upon undeniable authority; and if so, it is to be placed amongst his worst crimes. He is said himself to have remembered it with as deep sorrow as his nature allowed.

‡ The great superiority of Napoleon to all his generals has never been questioned; but many remarkable proofs of it have, with other illustrations of his character, for the most part very unfavourable to him, been given in publications which have appeared of late years. The 'Mémoires du Roi Joseph' and the work of M. Thiers are the most important of these in every respect. The light thrown by the latter, especially upon the conduct of the war in the Peninsula, is very striking. That Napoleon behaved with even more than his wonted selfishness and infinite unfairness to the greatest of his captains, Massena, requiring him to do impossible things, and withholding from him the succour both of troops and of his own presence, is manifest throughout the whole of the eventful years 1810 and 1811. But next to the admiration of our great Duke, which this history would increase, were that possible, is the respect which the reader is taught to feel for his antagonist, and the scorn for some of the generals under his com-

How grateful the relief which the friend of mankind, the lover of virtue, experiences when, turning from the contemplation of such a character, his eye rests upon the greatest man of our own or of any age;—the only one upon whom an epithet so thoughtlessly lavished by men, to foster the crimes of their worst enemies, may be innocently and justly bestowed! In Washington we truly behold a marvellous contrast to almost every one of the endowments and the vices which we have been contemplating; and which are so well fitted to excite a mingled admiration, and sorrow, and abhorrence. With none of that brilliant genius which dazzles ordinary minds; with not even any remarkable quickness of apprehension; with knowledge less than almost all persons in the middle ranks, and many well educated of the humbler classes possess; this eminent person is presented to our observation clothed in attributes as modest, as unpretending, as little calculated to strike or to astonish, as if he had passed unknown through some secluded region of private life. But he had a judgment sure and sound; a steadiness of mind which never suffered any passion, or even any feeling to ruffle its calm; a strength of understanding which worked rather than forced its way through all obstacles,—removing or avoiding rather than overleaping them. If profound sagacity, unshaken steadiness of purpose, the entire subjugation of all the passions which carry havoc through ordinary minds, and oftentimes lay waste the fairest prospects of greatness,—nay, the discipline of those feelings which are wont to lull or to seduce genius, and to mar and to cloud over the aspect of virtue herself,—joined with, or rather

mand, above all of Ney, whose want of principle is shown in each page, and indeed of every quality save great courage in the field and the power of manœuvring within very narrow limits of ground—his total want of moral courage being quite equal to his inordinate selfishness. His subsequent treachery to all parties in 1814 and 1815 might have been easily expected from his conduct in Spain.

leading to, the most absolute self-denial, the most habitual and exclusive devotion to principle,—if these things can constitute a great character, without either quickness of apprehension, or resources of information, or inventive powers, or any brilliant quality that might dazzle the vulgar,—then surely Washington was the greatest man that ever lived in this world uninspired by Divine wisdom, and unsustained by supernatural virtue.

Nor could the human fancy create a combination of qualities, even to the very wants and defects of the subject, more perfectly fitted for the scenes in which it was his lot to bear the chief part; whether we regard the war which he conducted, the political constitution over which he afterwards presided, or the tempestuous times through which he had finally to guide the bark himself had launched. Averse as his pure mind and temperate disposition naturally were from the atrocities of the French Revolution, he yet never leant against the cause of liberty, but clung to it even when degraded by the excesses of its savage votaries. Towards France, while he reprobated her aggressions upon other states, and bravely resisted her pretensions to control his own, he yet never ceased to feel the gratitude which her aid to the American cause had planted eternal in every American bosom; and for the freedom of a nation which had followed the noble example of his countrymen in breaking the chains of a thousand years, he united with those countrymen in cherishing a natural sympathy and regard. Towards England, whom he had only known as a tyrant, he never, even in the worst times of French turbulence at home, and injury to foreign states, could unbend from the attitude of distrust and defiance into which the conduct of her sovereign and his Parliament, not unsupported by her people, had forced him, and in which the war had left him. Nor was there ever, among all the complacent self-delusions with which the fond conceits of national vanity are apt to intoxi-

cate us, one more utterly fantastical than the notion wherewith the politicians of George III.'s school were wont to flatter themselves and beguile their followers, —that simply because the Great American would not yield either to the bravadoes of the Republican envoy, or to the fierce democracy of Jefferson, he therefore had become weary of republics, and a friend to monarchy and to England. In truth, his devotion to liberty, and his intimate persuasion that it can only be enjoyed under the republican scheme, constantly gained strength to the end of his truly glorious life; and his steady resolution to hold the balance even between contending extremes at home, as well as to repel any advances from abroad incompatible with perfect independence, was not more dictated by the natural justice of his disposition, and the habitual sobriety of his views, than it sprang from a profound conviction that a commonwealth is most effectually served by the commanding prudence which checks all excesses, and guarantees it against the peril that chiefly besets popular governments.

His courage, whether in battle or in council, was as perfect as might be expected from this pure and steady temper of soul. A perfectly just man, with a thoroughly firm resolution never to be misled by others, any more than to be by others overawed; never to be seduced or betrayed, or hurried away by his own weaknesses or self-delusions, any more than by other men's arts, nor ever to be disheartened by the most complicated difficulties, any more than to be spoilt on the giddy heights of fortune—such was this great man,—great, pre-eminently great, whether we regard him sustaining alone the whole weight of campaigns all but desperate, or gloriously terminating a just warfare by his resources and his courage—presiding over the jarring elements of his political council, alike deaf to the storms of all extremes—or directing the formation of a new government for a great

people, the first time that so vast an experiment had ever been tried by man—or finally retiring from the supreme power to which his virtue had raised him over the nation he had created, and whose destinies he had guided as long as his aid was required—retiring with the veneration of all parties, of all nations, of all mankind, in order that the rights of men might be conserved, and that his example never might be appealed to by vulgar tyrants. This is the consummate glory of Washington: a triumphant warrior where the most sanguine had a right to despair; a successful ruler in all the difficulties of a course wholly untried; but a warrior whose sword only left its sheath when the first law of our nature commanded it to be drawn; and a ruler who, having tasted of supreme power, gently and unostentatiously desired that the cup might pass from him, nor would suffer more to wet his lips than the most solemn and sacred duty to his Country and his God required!

To his latest breath did this great patriot maintain the noble character of a Captain, the patron of Peace, and a Statesman, the friend of Justice. Dying, he bequeathed to his heirs the sword which he had worn in the War of Liberty, and charged them "Never to take it from the scabbard but in self-defence, or in defence of their country and her freedom;" and commanding them, that when it should thus be drawn, they should "never sheath it nor ever give it up, but prefer falling with it in their hands to the relinquishment thereof"—words, the majesty and simple eloquence of which are not surpassed in the oratory of Athens and Rome.

It will be the duty of the Historian and the Sage in all ages, to let no occasion pass of commemorating this illustrious man; and until time shall be no more a test of the progress which our race has made in wisdom and in virtue will be derived from the veneration paid to the immortal name of WASHINGTON!

CHARLES CARROL.

We do a thing of very pernicious tendency if we confine the records of history to the most eminent personages who bear a part in the events which it commemorates. There are often others whose sacrifices are much greater, whose perils are more extreme, and whose services are nearly as valuable as those of the more prominent actors, and who yet have, from chance or by the modesty of a retiring and unpretending nature, never stood forward to fill the foremost places, or occupy the larger space in the eye of the world. To forget such men is as inexpedient for the public service as it is unjust towards the individuals. But the error is far greater of those who, in recording the annals of revolution, confine their ideas of public merit to the feats of leaders against established tyranny, or the triumphs of orators in behalf of freedom. Many a man in the ranks has done more by his zeal and his self-devotion than any chief to break the chains of a nation; and among such men Charles Carrol, the last survivor of the Patriarchs of the American Revolution, is entitled to the first place.

His family was settled in Maryland ever since the reign of James II., and had during that period been possessed of the same ample property, the largest in the Union. It stood, therefore, at the head of the aristocracy of the country; was naturally in alliance with the government; could gain nothing while it risked everything by a change of dynasty; and therefore, according to all the rules and the prejudices and the frailties which are commonly found guiding the

conduct of men in a crisis of affairs, Charles Carrol might have been expected to take part against the revolt, certainly never to join in promoting it. Such, however, was not this patriotic person. He was among the foremost to sign the celebrated Declaration of Independence. All who did so were believed to have devoted themselves and their families to the Furies. As he set his hand to the instrument, the whisper ran round the Hall of Congress, "There go some millions of property!" And there being many of the same name, he heard it said, "Nobody will know what Carrol it is," as no one signed more than his name, and one at his elbow addressing him remarked, "You'll get clear—there are several of the name—they will never know which to take—" "Not so!" he replied, and instantly added his residence, "of Carrolton."

He was not only a man of firm mind, and steadily-fixed principles; he was also a person of excellent abilities and great accomplishments. Educated in the study of the civil law at one of the French colleges, he had resided long enough in Europe to perfect his learning in all the ordinary branches of knowledge. On his return to America, he sided with the people against the mother country, and was soon known and esteemed as among the ablest writers of the Independent party. The confidence reposed in him soon after was so great, that he was joined with Franklin in the commission of three sent to obtain the concurrence of the Canadians in the revolt. He was a Member of Congress for the first two trying years, when that body was only fourteen in number, and might rather be deemed a cabinet council for action than anything like a deliberative senate. He then belonged, during the rest of the war, to the legislature of his native state, Maryland, until 1788, when he was elected one of the United States Senate, and continued for three years to act in this body. The rest of his time, until he retired

from public life in 1804, was passed as a senator of Maryland. In all these capacities he has left behind him a high reputation for integrity, eloquence, and judgment.

It is usual with Americans to compare the last thirty years of his life to the Indian summer*—sweet as it is tranquil, and partaking neither of the fierce heats of the earlier, nor the chilling frosts of a later season. His days were both crowned with happiness, and lengthened far beyond the usual period of human existence. He lived to see the people whom he had once known 900,000 in number pass twelve millions; a handful of dependent colonists become a nation of freemen; a dependent settlement assume its place among the first-rate powers of the world; and he had the delight of feeling that to this consummation he had contributed his ample share. As no one had run so large a risk by joining the revolt, so no one had adhered to the standard of freedom more firmly, in all its fortunes, whether waving in triumph or spread over disaster and defeat. He never had despaired of the commonwealth, nor ever had lent his ear to factious councils; never had shrunk from any sacrifice, nor ever had pressed himself forward to the exclusion of men better fitted to serve the common cause. Thus it happened to him that no man was more universally respected and beloved; none had fewer enemies; and, notwithstanding the ample share in which the gifts of fortune were showered upon his house, no one grudged its prosperity.

It would, however, be a very erroneous view of his merits and of the place which he filled in the eye of his country, which should represent him as only respected for his patriotism and his virtues. He had talents and acquirements which enabled him effectually to help the cause he espoused. His knowledge was

* What we call the Michaelmas summer; the "Short summer" of the south of Europe; in some countries, the St. Martin's summer.

various; and his eloquence was of a high order. It was, like his character, mild and pleasing; like his deportment, correct and faultless. Flowing smoothly, and executing far more than it seemed to aim at, every one was charmed by it, and many were persuaded. His taste was peculiarly chaste, for he was a scholar of extraordinary accomplishments; and few, if any, of the speakers in the New World came nearer the model of the more refined oratory practised in the parent state. Nature and ease, want of effort, gentleness united with sufficient strength, are noted as its enviable characteristics; and as it thus approached the tone of conversation, so, long after he ceased to appear in public, his private society is represented as displaying much of his rhetorical powers, and has been compared, not unhappily, by a late writer, to the words of Nestor, which fell like vernal snows as he spake to the people. In commotions, whether of the senate or the multitude, such a speaker, by his calmness and firmness joined, might well hope to have the weight, and to exert the control and mediatory authority of him, *pietate gravis et meritis*, who

——regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet.

In 1825, on the anniversary of the Half Century, after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the day was kept over the whole Union as a grand festival, and observed with extraordinary solemnity. As the clock struck the hour when that mighty instrument had been signed, another bell was also heard to toll; it was the passing bell of John Adams, one of the two surviving Presidents who had set their hands to the Declaration. The other was Jefferson; and it was soon after learned that at this hour he too had expired in a remote quarter of the country.

There now remained only Carrol to survive his fellows; and he had already reached extreme old age; but he lived yet seven years longer, and, in 1832, at

the age of ninety-five, the venerable patriarch was gathered to his fathers.*

The Congress went into mourning on his account for three months, as they had done for Washington, and for him alone.

* His family yet flourishes in America, and three of his grand-daughters are allied by marriage to three noble families in England.—One is now Marchioness Wellesley, the amiable and accomplished widow of that great statesman, whose ontset in life was marked by a cordial support of American Independence.—The other two are the Duchess of Leeds and Viscountess Stafford.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

We have had occasion to note the extraordinary capacity and brilliant history of Washington, next to whom and to Franklin, undoubtedly, among the great men that founded the American republic, is to be mentioned Jefferson, although he follows them at a considerable distance. But without the extraordinary virtue of the one—because, indeed, he never passed through the same temptation—and without the singular genius of the other, his services to the great cause of human liberty were truly valuable. His life was steadily devoted to the maintenance of his principles; and he displayed both firmness and ability in the important scenes in which he performed a conspicuous part. At a time when there is an unaccountable disposition, even among the friends of liberty, to undervalue the institutions of the great Republic, to grudge her extraordinary success, and to take delight in foretelling her dismemberment and her downfall, it becomes a duty to commemorate the virtues of her founders, even if we should not in all particulars adopt their political opinions, and if we should witness with pain some glaring imperfections in the frame or in the working of the polity which they established.

He was educated very carefully for the profession of the law, and had also the inestimable advantage of good classical and scientific instruction. He studied the mathematics under Dr. Small, a brother of the mathematician of that name, who acquired great fame among geometricians by his demonstrations of Matthew Stewart's celebrated General Theorems. When Jeffer-

son came to Virginia, his native state, he was soon distinguished among his brethren as a sound and accurate lawyer. His speaking was plain and business-like, aspiring to no higher praise. But during the eight years that he continued in the profession, his success was so great that he must, had he persevered, have risen to the foremost rank as a practitioner. It happened, however, that the disputes between the mother country and the colonies now broke out, and being chosen in his twenty-fifth year to represent his county in the Virginian Assembly, he soon withdrew his attention from legal pursuits, and finally abandoned them altogether, when he led the way to the Revolution by his proposal which the Assembly adopted, to establish a Committee of Correspondence with the legislatures of the other colonies. The Convention, and then the General Congress, soon followed; indeed, they grew naturally out of the Committee, and only waited the next act of oppression from England to mature them. Yet still there was the most marked reluctance to throw off the yoke of the mother country. Jefferson himself, in a letter to the Attorney-General, Randolph, written so late as the middle of 1775, and after the first blood that stained the unhappy quarrel had been shed, declared that "in the whole empire there was not a man who more cordially loved the union with Great Britain;" but he added his fixed resolution not to bear taxation without representation.* Even after the battle of Bunker's Hill he expressed to his old master, Dr. Small, then settled in Scotland, his anxious hopes of conciliation. The

* The thoughtless folly of some in the United States and some in France likening the case of the Union with Ireland to the subordination of America, exceeds belief. Who in America would ever have rebelled, nay, who would ever have agitated, if the Americans had been represented in our Parliament? Adam Smith, who proposed a general taxation of the empire to pay the public debt (Wealth of Nations, b. v. ch. 3), coupled it with the Irish Union and a representation of America and the West Indies.

party called moderate, in contradistinction to the Washingtons and Jeffersons, that under Dickenson, was not less prepared for desperate extremities, if the cardinal point of taxation should not be conceded by England. It is certain, and it is the greatest praise which can be bestowed upon any people in such circumstances, that all parties were guided by men who united extraordinary firmness with singular moderation—men, above all, whose singleness of purpose never appears in any instance to have been suspected —men who would have shuddered at the bare thought of levying a rent upon the feelings of the people which their arts had excited.

But if, in contemplating their whole conduct in the different courses which they had to steer, we look in vain for any deviation from the line of principle and integrity, we also find it impossible to discover any material error of judgment committed in the whole management of their perilous and perplexing affairs. From all the unreflecting violence, the sudden changes, the intemperate excesses, the thoughtless desertion of leaders, the alternations of popular admiration and hatred, by which other revolutions have been so constantly distinguished, when the people were the principal agents in bringing them about, it must be confessed with wonder that the conduct of the Americans was wholly exempt. No deliberative assembly of men, small in number and acting free from all popular instigation or control, ever carried on the affairs of a community settled in peace, and whose existence was assured, with greater calmness or more steady judgment than the American Congress showed in guiding a revolutionary movement, involving at each step of its progress their own existence and that of the community whom they represented and governed.

When it seemed manifest that neither side would yield, and a separation became inevitable, a committee of five, at the head of whom was Jefferson, received

the commission to prepare a manifesto of their reasons for at length taking the great step. His colleagues were Franklin, Adams, Sherman, and Livingston; the paper was prepared by him; they made few alterations; but the Congress omitted about a third part of it, in order to avoid topics that might give offence in the mother country. Among these omissions was a paragraph reprobating the African slave trade, to which they might not unjustly suppose England was partial, inasmuch as she had formerly interposed her authority—shamefully, scandalously, wickedly interposed it—to prevent the Abolition earnestly desired by her colonial subjects. Nevertheless, it is possible that the omission was also made with a view to conciliate the slave-holding states, who had not yet resolved to set their faces against this great abomination. With these omissions, and the further alteration of a few lines, the instrument was finally adopted, and it was signed on the Fourth of July, 1776.

This is that famous *Declaration of Independence* by which the freemen of the New world approved themselves worthy of their ancestors in the Old—those ancestors who had spoken, and written, and fought, and perished for conscience and for freedom's sake,—but whose descendants in the Old had not always borne their high lineage in mind. In the history of mankind there is no more important event, on which side soever of the Atlantic its consequences may be regarded; and if tyrants are sometimes said to feel uneasy on the Thirtieth of January, how much more fitted to inspire alarm are the recollections associated with the Fourth of July, in which no remorse can mingle on the people's part, and no consolation is afforded to their oppressors by the tendency of cruelty and injustice to mar the work they stain!

I have noted the unfortunate omission of the paragraph relating to the Slave Trade; and it is only just to Jefferson's memory that it should here be inserted.

The frame of the Declaration was to charge all the grievances complained of directly upon the King of England.

"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captivating* and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to more miserable death in their transportation thither. The piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his prerogative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain this execrable commerce. And, that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting these very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also has obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another."

It is to the unspeakable honour of Jefferson, that, born and bred in Virginia, himself an owner of negroes like all Virginian landholders, his first motion in the assembly was a proposition to facilitate the manumission of slaves. It was not till 1782 that the full power of emancipation was given by the legislature. But his proposal in 1779 was still further in advance of his age; it was to declare all children of slaves, born after a certain day, free, and to carry them forth at a certain age as colonists of a new territory—the only practical scheme, perhaps, by which the foul blot of slavery can be removed from the United States.

* As usual, this will be reckoned an Americanism (as the Greeks used to say of their colonists, a Solœcism). But it has undoubted English authority—Locke among others.

His plan for the planting of elementary schools to educate the whole people, and of establishing colleges for the middle classes, and an university for the higher branches of learning, was fated to experience similar delays, though happily not so long protracted; in 1796 it was partially, and in 1816 wholly, adopted by the Virginian legislature. In another favourite scheme he was more successful. The English law against perpetuities had strangely been modified, or rather abrogated, in Virginia, in the reign of Queen Anne; so that there was no power of cutting off an entail by fine or recovery, or in any other way than by a private or estate bill. Early in the Revolutionary war Jefferson succeeded in repealing this colonial law, and he soon after also obtained an abrogation of the law of primogeniture. The effect of the change has been great, and has spread universally in Virginia. Men's disposition of their property has followed the legal provision; no one thinks of making an eldest son his general heir; a corresponding division of wealth has taken place; there is no longer a class living in luxurious indulgence, while others are dependent and poor; you no longer see so many great equipages, but you meet everywhere with carriages sufficient for use and comfort; and though formerly some families possessed more plate than any one house can now show, the whole plate in the country (says a late historian) is increased forty if not fifty fold. It is affirmed with equal confidence, that though the class of over refined persons has been exceedingly curtailed, if not exterminated, the number of well-educated people has been incalculably increased. Nor does a session pass without disclosing talents which, sixty or seventy years ago, would have been deemed so rare as to carry a name from south to north of the Union.

Jefferson, however, was not more zealous in promoting all measures which might prevent the growth of aristocratic distinctions and maintain the level of

republican equality, than he was in furthering whatever might tend to complete religious liberty, with which he conscientiously deemed an established church to be incompatible. Upon this subject we may entertain a very different opinion, and may, with the most entire devotion to the principles of toleration, be able to descry dangers to those principles from the zeal of sects, as well as from the preponderance of a state church. No one who contemplates the intolerance exercised during the times of the Commonwealth in this country can repose any great reliance upon the meekness or the liberality of conflicting sectaries, while it must be admitted by all men, even by candid dissenters, that the Established Church is a mild ruler to those within her pale, a quiet and inoffensive neighbour to those without. But how far a church establishment is compatible with purely republican institutions is a very different question; and it would be most rash to condemn Jefferson's persevering efforts for eradicating all ecclesiastical privileges, when we reflect that he was acting as a strict, even a stern, republican. The clergy of Virginia had from the earliest settlement of the colony been endowed not only with tithe but with a parochial assessment, although the proportion of dissenters had increased to almost an equality with the numbers of the churchmen. It was not till the year 1799 that Jefferson's efforts were crowned with entire success, and the last marks of preference to one church over the rest were finally effaced. They who agreed with him in opinion upon this important subject maintain confidently that all remains of religious intolerance have been extinguished by those measures, and that the means of spiritual instruction have been greatly extended; but how far the cause of sound and rational religion generally has gained, can only be ascertained by the experience of a longer time.

After having for two years held the office of

Governor of Virginia by election, Jefferson was in 1782 chosen to represent that state in Congress. But it was no longer the same body in which he had acted during the tempestuous period of the Revolution, when it consisted only of fifty or sixty persons, all men of business, men of action. He was abundantly sensible of the difference, and looking back on the days when "the Washingtons and the Franklins were wont at once to seize the great point of a question, leaving the little ones to follow of themselves, and never treat two arguments at a time," he adds, "if the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send 150 lawyers, whose trade it is to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour?" From this scene he was not sorry to be released by accepting the mission to Paris, where he remained as minister of the United States from 1784 till 1790. The interest which he took in the great Revolution may well be conceived, intimately connected as it was with the American independence; but his foresight of its progress was not clearer than other men's, for he never doubted that a year after his return to America would see the "certain and happy termination of the struggle for liberty."

He now, at Washington's earnest request, overcame the hearty desire which he had of retiring into private life, and became his Secretary of State. If any one could doubt that great man's sincerely republican feelings, this anxiety for the introduction into his cabinet of the very chief of the democratic party must at once dispel all such fancies. The able and virtuous leader of the Federalists in that cabinet was Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury; Knox, the Secretary at War, joined him; while Randolph, the Attorney-General, sided with Jefferson. But Washington, taking part with neither, held the balance even between them with the scrupulous justice which marked his lofty nature, and with the firm hand which he of all men most

possessed. It is strange, it is melancholy, to see the folly of sanguine men in pertinaciously believing that those things have a real existence which they vehemently wish were true. Because Washington never took part with the French faction, and kept aloof from the more violent movements of the democratic party, and because Hamilton and others of the Federalists despaired of a republican government being practicable, or at least permanent, in a great community, the party in this country most opposed to popular institutions, and who retained a hankering after monarchical government in America, must needs flatter themselves that there remained in the United States a leaning towards the British yoke, and that at all events the illustrious President as well as the Federalist chiefs were friendly to kingly power. The truth is, that even Hamilton, the most open admirer of our institutions, never dreamed of giving them another trial in America, until all attempts to establish a lasting republic should be found to fail. His words were remarkable in recommending that all other modifications of popular government should be tried before recourse was again had to monarchy. "That mind," he said, "must be really depraved which would not prefer the equality of political rights, the foundation of pure republicanism, if it were to be obtained eventually with order." Accordingly each year that what he regarded as the great, though not very promising experiment, continued without a failure—each year that the American constitution proved sufficient for the government of the rapidly-extending people—diminished those apprehensions upon which alone his opinion rested. But Washington never felt any such fears, and wanted no experience to confirm his deliberate purpose of a republic. Towards England he never felt any sentiments but those of distrust and alienation; and his well-considered judgment respecting a return to monarchy may be easily gathered from his remarkable

expression when endeavouring to prevent Jefferson's resignation in 1793, even after the excesses of the French Revolution had lessened the number of republicans everywhere, "that he did not believe there were ten men in the United States for a monarchy." They who flattered themselves that Washington was disposed to content those ten may be classed with the men whose sanguine temperament no disappointments can cure,—the class among whom, unhappily, Mr. Pitt held an eminent place, as he showed when a friend carried him a letter from Geneva, mentioning the assembling of an army of reserve near Dijon, and received for answer from the minister, that "he must have a very disaffected correspondent." The army, whose existence at Dijon was thus deemed impossible, because it was unpleasant, in less than a month after decided the fate of Europe at Marengo.

When Washington resigned, Jefferson was proposed for the Presidency, but Adams obtained it, and he was chosen Vice-President. At the expiration of Adams's three years, Jefferson succeeded him; and set an example to all party chiefs when promoted to power. He made it his rule never either to remove an adversary because his own partizans required it, or to retain one because his enemies threatened and assailed him. He pursued his own course, regardless of the taunts from one party or the importunity of the other; and, although exposed to more unmeasured abuse than any man that ever filled his high station, he lived to see full justice done him, and the firm and manly course of his administration generally approved. It is profitable to consider such an example; and they who are unable to follow it respecting measures as well as men, may be well assured that they mistook their vocation when they assumed to direct the councils of their country. Whoever suffers himself to be seduced or deterred from the path of his duty, does not rule, but obey; he usurps the place of others; he pretends to

guide, when he slavishly follows; but he puts forth false pretences, and would be understood to act for himself, while he is but a tool in other men's hands; he meanly undertaking the responsibility for the profit or the patronage, they dictating his conduct while they skulk in the dark. It is a compact equally dishonouring both the parties, and of which the country, whose best interests are sacrificed by it, has the most just right to complain.

Although Jefferson retired from public life at the close of his second presidency, in 1806, his days were prolonged for twenty years beyond that period, and these he passed on his estate in Virginia, superintending agricultural improvements, and watching over the university which he had founded and which he regarded with unceasing parental care. Like the other chief magistrates of the Republic, he retired without any fortune, and his property was at his decease found barely sufficient to pay his debts. It was a singular and affecting coincidence, that when the people were assembled in countless numbers to celebrate the Fiftieth anniversary of the American Independence, the passing-bell should toll of Adams, one of the last surviving patriots who had signed the memorable act of the Fourth of July. On that day he expired; but it was after a few days found, that at the same time another of the patriarchs of the New World had also rested from his labours; the author of that famous instrument had, on the same day, closed his earthly course, in his 84th year.

FRANKLIN.

ONE of the most remarkable men certainly of our times as a politician, or of any age as a philosopher, was Franklin; who also stands alone in combining together these two characters, the greatest that man can sustain, and in this, that having borne the first part in enlarging science by one of the greatest discoveries ever made, he bore the second part in founding one of the greatest empires in the world.

In this truly great man everything seems to concur that goes towards the constitution of exalted merit. First, he was the architect of his own fortune. Born in the humblest station, he raised himself by his talents and his industry, first to the place in society which may be attained with the help only of ordinary abilities, great application, and good luck; but next to the loftier heights which a daring and happy genius alone can scale; and the poor Printer's boy, who at one period of his life had no covering to shelter his head from the dews of night, rent in twain the proud dominion of England, and lived to be the Ambassador of a Commonwealth which he had formed, at the Court of the haughty Monarchs of France who had been his allies.

Then, he had been tried by prosperity as well as adverse fortune, and had passed unhurt through the perils of both. No ordinary apprentice, no commonplace journeyman, ever laid the foundations of his independence in habits of industry and temperance more deep than he did, whose genius was afterwards to rank him with the Galileos and the Newtons of the

old world. No patrician born to shine in Courts, or assist at the Councils of Monarchs, ever bore his honours in a lofty station more easily, or was less spoilt by the enjoyment of them than this common workman did when negotiating with Royal representatives, or caressed by all the beauty and fashion of the most brilliant Court in Europe.

Again, he was self-taught in all he knew. His hours of study were stolen from those of sleep and of meals, or gained by some ingenious contrivance for reading while the work of his daily calling went on. Assisted by none of the helps which affluence tenders to the studies of the rich, he had to supply the place of tutors, by redoubled diligence, and of commentaries, by repeated perusal. Nay, the possession of books was to be obtained by copying what the art which he himself exercised furnished easily to others.

Next, the circumstances under which others succumb he made to yield, and bent to his own purposes —a successful leader of a revolt that ended in complete triumph after appearing desperate for years; a great discoverer in philosophy without the ordinary helps to knowledge; a writer famed for his chaste style without a classical education; a skilful negotiator, though never bred to politics; ending as a favourite, nay, a pattern of fashion, when the guest of frivolous Courts, the life which he had begun in garrets and in workshops.

Lastly, combinations of faculties in others deemed impossible, appeared easy and natural in him. The philosopher, delighting in speculation, was also eminently a man of action. Ingenious reasoning, refined and subtle consultation, were in him combined with prompt resolution, and inflexible firmness of purpose. To a lively fancy, he joined a learned and deep reflection; his original and inventive genius stooped to the convenient alliance of the most ordinary prudence in every-day affairs; the mind that soared above the

clouds, and was conversant with the loftiest of human contemplations, disdained not to make proverbs and feign parables for the guidance of apprenticed youths and servile maidens; and the hands that sketched a free constitution for a whole continent, or drew down the lightning from heaven, easily and cheerfully lent themselves to simplify the apparatus by which truths were to be illustrated, or discoveries pursued.

His whole course both in acting and in speculation was simple and plain, ever preferring the easiest and the shortest road, nor ever having recourse to any but the simplest means to compass his ends. His policy rejected all refinements, and aimed at accomplishing its purposes by the most rational and obvious expedients. His language was unadorned, and used as the medium of communicating his thoughts, not of raising admiration; but it was pure, expressive, racy. His manner of reasoning was manly and cogent, the address of a rational being to others of the same order; and so concise, that preferring decision to discussion, he never exceeded a quarter of an hour in any public address. His correspondence upon business, whether private or on state affairs, is a model of clearness and compendious brevity; nor can any state-papers surpass in dignity and impression, those of which he is believed to have been the author in the earlier part of the American revolutionary war. His mode of philosophising was the purest application of the Inductive principle, so eminently adapted to his nature and so clearly dictated by common sense, that we can have little doubt it would have been suggested by Franklin, if it had not been unfolded by Bacon; though it is as clear that in this case it would have been expounded in far more simple terms. But of all this great man's scientific excellences, the most remarkable is the smallness, the simplicity, the apparent inadequacy, of the means which he employed in his experimental

researches. His discoveries were made with hardly any apparatus at all; and if, at any time, he had been led to employ instruments of a somewhat less ordinary description, he never rested satisfied until he had, as it were, afterwards translated the process, by resolving the problem with such simple machinery, that you might say he had done it wholly unaided by apparatus. The experiments by which the identity of lightning and electricity was demonstrated, were made with a sheet of brown paper, a bit of twine, a silk thread, and an iron key.

Upon the integrity of this great man, whether in public or in private life, there rests no stain. Strictly honest, and even scrupulously punctual in all his dealings, he preserved in the highest fortune that regularity which he had practised as well as inculcated in the lowest. The phrase which he once used when interrupted in his proceedings upon the most arduous and important affairs, by a demand of some petty item in a long account,—"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn,"—has been cited against him as proving the laxity of his dealings when in trust of public money; it plainly proves the reverse: for he well knew that in a country abounding in discussion, and full of bitter personal animosities, nothing could be gained of immunity by refusing to produce his vouchers at the fitting time; and his venturing to use such language demonstrates that he knew his conduct to be really above all suspicion.

In domestic life he was faultless, and in the intercourse of society, delightful. There was a constant good humour and a playful wit, easy and of high relish, without any ambition to shine, the natural fruit of his lively fancy, his solid, natural good sense, and his cheerful temper, that gave his conversation an unspeakable charm, and alike suited every circle, from the humblest to the most elevated. With all his strong opinions, so often solemnly declared, so imperishably

recorded in his deeds, he retained a tolerance for those who differed with him which could not be surpassed in men whose principles hang so loosely about them as to be taken up for a convenient cloak, and laid down when found to impede their progress. In his family he was everything that worth, warm affections, and sound prudence could contribute, to make a man both useful and amiable, respected and beloved. In religion, he would by many be reckoned a latitudinarian; yet it is certain that his mind was imbued with a deep sense of the Divine perfections, a constant impression of our accountable nature, and a lively hope of future enjoyment. Accordingly, his death-bed, the test of both faith and works, was easy and placid, resigned and devout, and indicated at once an unflinching retrospect of the past, and a comfortable assurance of the future.

REFLECTIONS.

It is impossible to close the page of history which records the foundation of the Great Republic, without adverting to the singular change that seems of late years to have come over some friends of liberty in this country, inclining them against the popular institutions which that system consecrates, and upon which it reposes. Writers of ability, but scantily endowed with candour, observers of moderate circumspection, men labouring under the prejudices of European society, and viewing the social system of the New World through the medium of habits and associations peculiar to that of the Old, have brought back for our information a number of details, for which they needed hardly to cross the Atlantic, and have given us as discoveries a relation of matters necessarily existing under a very popular government, and in a very new community. As those travellers had pretty generally failed to make many converts among the friends of free institutions either in France or in England, there

would have been little harm done to the cause of truth, and no great interruption given to the friendly relations which the highest interests of both countries require should be maintained unbroken between them. But unhappily some persons of a superior class appear, from party or from personal feelings, to have, without due reflection on the mischief they were doing, suffered their minds to be poisoned by the same prejudices; and, a signal indiscretion having suffered their private letters, written under the influence of such prepossessions, to see the light, it becomes every one, whose general opinions coincide with those of the individuals in question, to protest against the inference that such sentiments are shared by the Liberal party in England. This becomes the more necessary, in consequence of the tendency which the most reprehensible conduct of some of the States in the Union towards their public creditors has to prepare the way for the reception of such unsound opinions—opinions which, if left to themselves, would probably soon sink into oblivion, how respectable soever the quarters which they may, without due reflection, have been suffered to reach. I allude more particularly to some letters lately published of Lord Sydenham, written confidentially to his late colleagues, while he was acting under them as Governor-General of British North America—letters the publication of which has, to me, who knew their writer, and respected his generally sound principles, been a subject of much regret, which he appears to have written in a moment of some irritation, but which would do serious injury to the good understanding that happily has been restored between the two nations, if they were supposed to speak the sense of those among us who are most friendly to America.

A great deal of vague and general abuse may be passed over, as that the Americans "are a calculating people, and fight not for glory but plunder"—"such a

set of braggadocios, that their public men must submit to the claims of their extravagant vanity and self-sufficiency"—that there is among them a "general debasement"—"that those who aim at place are corrupt and corrupters, and the masses who bestow preferment ignorant, prejudiced, dishonest, and utterly immoral." I fear me most if not all of this railing might be retorted upon a certain nation whose wars in China have been warmly eulogized by Lord Sydenham in another letter, though he is greatly scandalized that all the glory of his friends is not likely to prevent their seats "slipping from under them;"* a nation whose general elections have of late years been found a scene of the most hateful corruption, although we should be guilty of a most gross and unpardonable exaggeration were we on this account to stigmatize the whole people as "utterly immoral" in the terms rashly applied to his neighbours by the Canadian Governor.

But the charges which he allows himself to lay, and which his relatives have thought it right to publish, are more specific. "The Government seems to me the worst of tyrannies, that of the mob supported by the most odious and profligate corruption. No man who aims at power dare avow an opinion of his own; he must pander to the lowest prejudices of the people, and in their parties (the two great ones which now divide the Union, the Loco-focos and the Whigs) the only subject of the leading men of either is to instil some wretchedly low sentiment into the people, and then explode it for their own advantage. There is scarcely a statesman of either who would not adopt the most violent or the basest doctrine however, if he

* The *naïveté* of this passage is exceedingly great. "But what is the use of all this glory if your seats slip from under you?" Then, after a great abuse of John Bull, "I am afraid that the possession of power is making me terribly inclined to despotism, for I am thinking of planting my cabbages rather under the shade of Metternich or the Czar," &c., p. 326. To be sure; and this is exactly the consequence of being Governor-General with dictatorial power.

thought that he could work it to advantage with the majority—peculation and jobbing are the only objects; delusion, and the basest flattery of the people, the means."—"If," adds this discreet statesman, "they drive us into a war, the *Blacks* in the South will soon settle all that part of the Union; and in the North I feel sure that we can lick them to their heart's content."—"A Republic could answer in former times, in countries where was *no people*, or few; the bulk of the population Helots and slaves; but where there is a people, and they really have the power, government is only possible by pandering to their worst passions, which makes the country unbearable to a man of any education, and the Central Government itself a byword amongst civilized nations. I hope (he concludes, perhaps consistently enough) that we may live long enough to see this great bubble burst; and I do not believe that we need be very long-lived for that" (316).

I am sorry to be under the necessity of declaring that one is at a loss whether most to marvel at the total want of common reflection, or the extraordinary want of common information, in this passage—the production of a man in high office, addressed to a man still higher, and who presumes, without any deliberation, and with no knowledge of the subject, to pronounce so sweeping a censure upon the whole body of a great nation, all their statesmen, and all their institutions. It is fit the Americans should well understand that these are the errors and this the rashness of the late Governor-General of Canada, and not shared by the Liberal party, or by any but the most ignorant and the most prejudiced in this country.

First of all, Lord Sydenham is no authority on the subject of the United States, merely because he was Governor of Canada, and never in the Union at all. Had he remained in London he would have been as well qualified to judge of those States, as his living near them for two years could make him; nay, a

great deal better; for his residence in Canada, without giving him one tittle more of information, had the manifest tendency to fill his mind with Canadian prejudices; and these views seem to have gained a still greater ascendant over him by the disputes of a border nature, in which he was involved. I should, during the separation of England and Scotland before the seventeenth century, never have looked to the Warden of the West Marches for a candid account of the people on the Scotch border when he lived at Carlisle. But, had the Warden directed his hostile operations from York or from Lincoln, I should have believed him just as ignorant as if he had lived in London, and a very great deal more prejudiced.

Next, let us observe how little the Governor-General had studied constitutions when he assumes the office of deciding on their comparative merits. It would not be easy to crowd more manifest errors into one sentence than are found in the few lines about ancient republics. Many things respecting those systems are obscurely known, and are therefore the subject of controversy; but no one ever affected to doubt of the matters on which this strange sentence errs, and errs dogmatically. Sparta is of course alluded to by the mention of Helots; but Sparta was not a republican, it was an aristocratic government. Then Athens, which was a republic, so far from proving that such a government "could answer," is precisely the example always resorted to in order to prove what Lord Sydenham states to be the vice of the American Government as contrasted with the Grecian, namely, the statesman "pandering to the passions of the people." Yet, this notwithstanding, can any one say that Athens, the very seat of this worst of vices, was by it "made unbearable to a man of any education?" Does he conceive that any of us, even in Canada, are more refined, more civilized, more educated, than the ornaments of Athenian society, the

very men who were fain to court the people? It is another error equally great to make it the peculiar characteristic of the modern republic, and the feature that distinguishes it from the ancient, that the "people really had the power." In Athens, if anywhere, they really had the power; we are only left to speculate on the restraints under which it was exercised, and even to doubt if any such existed in practice. But assuredly the bulk of the power was in their hands more than in any other democracy, ancient or modern.

That in the American Government there exist great imperfections no man can doubt; one among the greatest has lately been removed, because the central power of the Federacy is now enabled better to maintain its relations with foreign states in consequence of the recent improvement of the constitutional law. But there remain blots which still disfigure the system, and in practice sadly mar its working. Of these the very worst, undoubtedly, is the entire change of public functionaries, from the highest to the lowest, which follows every change of the President, converts all the more considerable members of the community into place-hunters, and makes the whole interval, between one election of chief magistrate and another, a constant scene of canvass. The removal of this and a few other imperfections would make the Government of America as faultless as a very popular system can ever be. That some and even considerable evils would be left, evils inseparable from a Republic, because growing out of the large share assigned to the people in the distribution of power, cannot be doubted. But it is no discovery of Lord Sydenham's that as long as men are men, power and pre-eminence will be sought after; and that if the right of bestowing these is vested in the people, the people will be courted by those who seek after them.

We are upon a practical, not a speculative, question; and that question is not as to the impossible

attainment of theoretical perfection, but as to the comparative merits of different schemes of polity. Power must rest in some part of the community. Patronage must immediately or ultimately rest with them that have power. Shall they be the people at large? No, says Lord Sydenham; for if the people are to choose their ministers, they who would fill ministerial places will debase themselves by pandering to the people's prejudices. But what if we intrust this delicate office to a court or a prince, for the purpose of making the duty be more uprightly discharged, and exalting the character of the candidates for favour? Are we so blinded by the evils of popular canvass as to have all of a sudden forgotten that other time-serving, that old species of fawning, that worser form of flattery, which the friends of freedom and of purity used to charge upon the parasites of princes, the crew of courtiers, the minions who pander to the propensities, not of the people, but the despot? Then shall power and patronage be vested in a patrician body, in a class of men whom "a man of education" might well find not "unbearable?" The class fawned upon would here no doubt be found more refined in its tastes, and must be propitiated with a more dainty flattery. Yet I question if the fawning would be less active, if the suppleness of the candidate for favour would be less pliant, if the senator would be less given to cringe, than they who, instead of crawling in the ante-room of the noble, after a more homely fashion take the hand of the peasant and the mechanic. I greatly doubt if less falsehood will be found in the smooth speeches addressed to the select patrician circle than in the boisterous harangues delivered to win the plebeian. One ground of my doubt is the recollection which we all have of the scenes of endless intrigue and wide-spread corruption displayed by the aristocratic courts of modern Italy, to say nothing of ancient Rome in her more patrician days; and another ground

of my doubt is precisely this, that men are more prone to practise deception in secret than in public, and therefore more likely to use unworthy arts in the closet, the appointed scene of intrigue, than on the hustings, from whence the grosser species of intrigue, at least, must for ever be banished.*

And here is furnished a very striking proof of the entire carelessness with which this political reasoner made his observations upon America, and formed his opinions respecting her people. He plainly affirms of all statesmen in the United States that "their only objects are peculation and jobbing;" and their means of being able to peculate and job are "the basest flattery of the people." Now surely a very little reflection would have sufficed to satisfy any considerate person that this charge is wholly impossible. The existence of such violent party divisions, and the publicity with which every department of Government is administered, make peculation impracticable. They might as well be charged with "compassing and imagining the death of the King." It is an offence which in such a country can have no existence. But this manifest error into which the writer has fallen, while it shows the strength of his prejudices against the Americans, proves also the weakness of his means of annoyance; and it is a sufficient answer to much of his general invective.

As to the standing topic of vulgar manners, let it be fairly stated that there are many parts both of France and England to which we should not think of resorting were we in quest of patterns, not of printed goods but polished manners. Even while representing Manchester, Lord Sydenham would hardly have cited the bulk of his constituents as superior in elegance to the

* We must hold even the balance, and blame bad arts, however applied. That I am as far as possible from excusing the unworthy arts of demagogues, above all, their corrupting the people by their vile practices, has appeared under the head of Wilkes,—*British Statesmen*, vol. i. p. 425.

people of New York. But an authority fully as high as himself on this delicate matter, M. de. Lafayette, would, as I personally know, have severely chid him for underrating even the manners of the Americans; and if, after such an authority, any further defence were required, two facts may be mentioned. Sir R. Liston declared that he had never conversed with a higher bred sovereign in any court of Europe than General Washington; and among the women of the highest breeding in our day no one would hesitate to mention Lady Wellesley.* They who have never been in the United States may surely be pardoned if they feel unable to believe the notion entertained by others who, like themselves and Lord Sydenham, have also never been there, but who would yet assume General Washington and Lady Wellesley to be the only persons of fine manners ever produced in the Union.

It is, however, not avowedly on the score of their under-breeding that the Governor-General rests his dislike of the Americans. On the contrary, he rather seems disposed to pass that head of complaint lightly, though it is plainly enough at the bottom of many feelings upon the subject. His main accusation is the mob tyranny, and the habit of their public men quailing before it. No doubt a certain degree of this evil is inseparable from every popular Government. Who in Ireland dares profess any opinion hostile to the Romish hierarchy throughout three of the provinces, or favourable to it in the fourth? No rational politician dares attend a popular meeting now in that country for fear of Repeal, which not one single member of either House of Parliament will vote for, save a few Irishmen under mob influence. Who in 1831 was

* Others might well be added. For example, Lady Ashburton; but her long residence in this country prevents all, excepting a few, from recollecting that she came from America in her younger days as highly accomplished in manners as the world has more lately seen her.

safe in England if he proclaimed his dislike of the Reform Bill? What public meeting have any moderate liberal politicians ventured to hold of late years? Have not even the corn-law repealers been fain to raise the popular cry of cheap bread in assemblies collected by tickets, and from which the multitude were carefully excluded? We may not go so far as the Americans in humouring the popular cry of the hour when we address our constituents, because our Government is less purely popular than theirs; but can any one doubt that the speeches of our political chiefs—aye, and even their measures when in office—take the tincture of the multitude to whom they are addressed, and whose favour they are expected to conciliate? If this be denied, we may require to be informed what Lord Sydenham precisely means when—adverting to the free-trade measures respecting timber, sugar, and, above all, corn, in 1841—he says, "It is an immense point gained to get a new flag under which to fight. The people of England do not care a rush for any of your Irish hobby-horses; and they are not with you upon Church matters, or grievances of that kind. Even your foreign policy has not touched them the least, and I doubt whether twenty victories would give you a borough or a county; but you have now given them an intelligible principle offering practical benefits to contend for, and though defeated on it, as you doubtless will be, defeat will be attended with reputation, and will make you, as a party in the country, far stronger than you have been of late" (p. 90). Now it is to be observed that the preference here given to the Corn Bill over the Irish Church Reform and the other measures is not rested on the relative merits, but solely on the relative popular tendency, of the different plans—their *capabilities* as "flags to fight under;" and the Corn Law is preferred because it is a better party Shibboleth. No doubt Lord Sydenham would have a right to urge that he had always maintained the free-

trade doctrine for its own sake; but why will he not allow American statesmen also to prefer each his several tenets for their own sakes? Suppose he had found a letter from Mr. Stevenson to a South Carolina friend maintaining that some proposition for preventing anti-slavery petitions being received by Congress was a fine "flag to fight under," "offered an intelligible principle to contend for," and, though defeated, would make the Virginian "party stronger than it had of late been," how little would it have availed to urge that Mr. Stevenson had always held the same opinions? How triumphantly would Lord Sydenham have pointed to this letter as a confession that American statesmen frame their conduct upon the plan of pandering to the tastes and passions of the multitude? And would it have been deemed an answer to his inference, if it had appeared that the party proposing this extreme course had never thought of it for ten years which they had passed in office, but merely brought it forward when all other means of obtaining influence had failed, and when their fortunes among the constituent bodies of the country were become desperate?

But these possibly are extreme cases. Are there no other instances, even in our own better regulated system, so much less disfigured by popular excess than the American;—no instances of public men shaping their conduct and their speeches according to the opinions and feelings, or even the tastes and caprices, of the people, either generally or locally? Surely common fairness towards the Americans required some consideration of the tone taken in our own election addresses, of the speeches made on our own hustings and at our public meetings, of the difference between these and the parliamentary speeches of the same individuals, nay, of the well known difference between the conduct of parliament itself during its first and its last session. What minister ever ventured to propose a civil list on the eve of a general election?

The arts to which our attention is directed by these remarks are in the highest degree discreditable to all who use them, and are incalculably hurtful to the people upon whom they are practised. If they are, to a certain extent, inseparable from a very popular Government, their mischief forms a serious deduction from the merits of that system. To restrain them within the narrowest possible limits is the bounden duty of all statesmen, but most especially is it the duty of those who maintain the superior advantages of a popular constitution. Them, above all others, it behoves not to lower the character of popular men, not to corrupt the people themselves; for it must never be forgotten that the flattery and the falsehood which taint the atmosphere of a court, the poison which tyrants inhale with their earliest breath, cannot with impunity be inhaled by the people.

After all, in estimating the merits of any Government, we must never lose sight of what is the end of all Government—the comfort and happiness of the people. It may safely be admitted that if a scheme could be devised for embodying a legislature of wise, virtuous, and enlightened men, with an executive council of capacity, integrity, firmness, removed from popular control, animated with the desire of furthering the public good, and consulting, in the pursuit of it, no will or authority but their own chastened judgment, a much purer and more noble Government would be constituted than any that owes its origin to the public choice, and acts under the people's superintendence. But, unhappily, experience has proved that any legislature, and any executive body, removed from all control, soon forgets the end of its creation; and instead of consulting the good of the community at large, confines all its exertions to furthering its own individual interest. So it must ever be until we are blessed with a descent of angels to undertake the management of our concerns. Till then there is but one security for

the community—a watchful superintendence and an efficient control over its representatives and rulers. The experiment may be coarse and clumsy; it may be attended with evils of a very serious kind; it may give rise to an unfortunate influence being exercised by classes of the people who are neither very refined nor always very honest, nor even very well informed as to their own interests. Nevertheless, as human society is constituted, in the choice of evils this is the least; it admits of many compensations; it gives the prospect of much diminution as knowledge and as virtue advance; whereas any system that excludes the popular voice must needs lead to a thraldom and to abuses which admit of no compensation, and, instead of wearing out in time, only gather strength and acquire increased malignity with every year that revolves.

The worst of all the features in the Union Lord Sydenham has no doubt passed entirely over—the disgraceful prejudices against negro emancipation. But even these may yield to circumstances, and give place to more rational as well as more humane views of national policy, provided a free government continues to bless America, and no catastrophe happens to destroy the Union. Lord Sydenham indeed is thoughtless enough to view with a kind of exultation, the prospect of negro insurrection as a consequence of the United States daring to wage war with England. Misguided, short-sighted man! and ignorant, oh, profoundly ignorant of the things that belong to the peace and the happiness of either colour in the New World! A negro revolt in our islands, where the whites are as a handful among their sable brethren, might prove fatal to European life; but the African at least would be secure, as far as security can be derived by wading through rivers of blood. But on the continent, where the numbers of the two colours are evenly balanced, and all the arms are in the white man's hands, who but the bitterest enemy of the unhappy slaves could bear

to contemplate their wretchedness in the attempt by violence to shake off their chains!—Then again he feels quite confident that the northern states must be utterly defeated, and easily defeated, as soon as they draw the sword against England. Possibly; and yet this inference has not been very logically drawn by Lord Sydenham from the history of the former American war. When the people of the colonies numbered less than three millions, they defeated the best troops of England, possessed as she was of all the strongholds of the country, and sweeping the ocean with her fleets, before the infant Republic had a flag waving upon the seas. That twenty-four millions, with entire possession of the land, and a formidable fleet at sea, should be overwhelmed by the Canadians and Nova Scotians, is certainly a possible event; but that it is as much a matter of course as the Governor of these petty settlements complacently assures himself, may reasonably be doubted. Nay, it seems barely possible that some notion should creep into the minds of the Americans, as how a war might lead to the very opposite result, of Canada joining with the United States, and forming an additional member of that great confederacy.

They, however, who are the best friends of both countries, must be the least willing to indulge on either side in such speculations. The Americans will, it is to be hoped, not be tempted to form such pernicious projects by any notion of a hostile feeling towards them prevailing in this country. They may be well assured, that far from regarding their Government as "a bubble," and trusting that it soon may burst, the all but universal sentiment in England is the hope that it may long continue to exhibit the proud spectacle of popular freedom, and even popular power, combined with order at home, and moderation abroad, in successful refutation of all the old opinions that a republic was impossible in a large territory with a numerous people.

FREDERIC II.

If we turn from the truly great man whom we were last engaged in contemplating, to his celebrated contemporary in the Old World, who only affected the philosophy that Franklin possessed, and employed his talents for civil and military affairs, in extinguishing that independence which Franklin's life was consecrated to establish, the contrast is marvellous indeed, between the Monarch and the Printer.

In one particular this celebrated Prince may be said to resemble the great Republican. His earlier years were spent in the school of adversity. Whether the influence of this discipline, usually so propitious to the character of great men, was exerted in chastening his principles, and in calling forth and regulating those feelings which the education of a court tends either to stifle or pervert, may be learnt not only from the private history of his reign, but from some anecdotes preserved of his conduct immediately after he came to the crown; while, as yet, his heart could not have become callous from the habits of uncontrolled dominion, nor his principles unsettled by the cares of his turbulent career. When William discovered his son's plan for escaping from Prussia, he caused him to be arrested, together with his confidential friend De Catt, and instantly brought to trial before a military commission. The interposition of Austria alone saved the prince's life; but he was thrown into prison at the fortress of Custrin, where his friend was beheaded on a scaffold raised before his apartment to the level of the window, from which he was forced to view this

afflicting spectacle. He was so much overpowered, that he sunk senseless into the chair which had been placed to keep him at the window, and only recovered to bewail, with every appearance of the most poignant feeling, the fate of this unhappy young man, who had fallen a sacrifice to his faithful attachment. The savage conduct of William, indeed, left him scarce any other occupation; his confinement was as strict, and his treatment as harsh, as that of the meanest felon. By degrees, however, his guards watched him less closely, and he was even permitted to steal out under cover of night, by circuitous paths, to a château in the neighbourhood, the residence of a very amiable nobleman's family, who received him with the greatest kindness, and exposed themselves to constant risk on his account. Among them he spent as much of his time, for above a year, as he could gain from the humanity or treachery of his jailer. It was chiefly with music and reading that he consoled himself in the gloom of his prison; and those good folks not only furnished him with books and candles, but made little concerts for him in the evenings, when he could escape to enjoy their society. The young Wrechs (for that was the name of this family) were sufficiently accomplished and sprightly to gain Frederic's esteem. He delighted much in their company; and though they were so numerous, that the baron was kept in narrow circumstances by the necessary expenses of their maintenance and education, he contrived, by straitening himself still more, to scrape together supplies of money to the amount of above six thousand rix-dollars, with which he assisted, from time to time, his royal guest.

Such were the obligations which Frederic owed, during this eventful period of his life, first to the House of Austria, whose spirited and decisive interference saved him from the scaffold; next, to the unfortunate De Catt, who had sacrificed his life in the attempt to aid his escape; and, lastly, to the amiable

family of the Wrechs, who, at the imminent risk of their lives, and at a certain expense little suited to their moderate circumstances, had tenderly alleviated the hardships of his confinement.—As Frederic mounted the throne a short time after he was set at liberty, we might naturally expect that the impression of favours like these would outlive the ordinary period of royal memory. The first act of his reign was to invade the hereditary dominions of Austria, and reduce to the utmost distress the daughter and representative of the monarch whose timely interposition had saved his life, by heading a powerful combination against her, after stripping her of an invaluable province.—The family and relations of De Catt never received, during the whole of his reign, even a smile of royal favour.—To the Wrechs he not only never repaid a kreutzer of the money which they had pinched themselves to raise for his accommodation, but manifested a degree of coldness amounting to displeasure: so that this worthy and accomplished family were in a kind of disgrace during his time, never received well at court, nor promoted to any of the employments which form in some sort the patrimony of the aristocracy. They were favoured by Prince Henry; and all that they could boast of owing to the king was, to use an expression of his most zealous panegyrist, that "*he did not persecute them*" on account of his brother's patronage. His defenders screened this ungrateful conduct behind the Prussian law, which prohibits the loan of money to princes of the blood, and declares all debts contracted by them null. But since the *king* was to govern himself by the enactments of this law, it would have been well if the *prince*, too, had considered them. We have all heard of Louis XII. proudly declaring that it was unworthy the King of France to revenge the wrongs of the Duke of Orleans. It was reserved for the unfeeling meanness of Frederic to show us, that the King was not bound by the highest obligations

of the Prince of Prussia — that he could shelter himself from the claims of honour and gratitude, by appealing to laws which had been generously violated in his behalf.

But it may be fair to mention the solitary instance of a contrary description, which we can find in comparing his conduct on the throne with the favours received during his misfortunes. He had been assisted in his musical relaxations at Potsdam by the daughter of a citizen, who, without any personal charms, had the accomplishment most valuable to the prince, secluded as he was from all society, and depending for amusement almost entirely on his flute. His father no sooner heard of this intimacy, than he supposed there must be some criminal intercourse between the young amateurs, and proceeded to meet the tender passion by the universal remedy which he was in the habit of administering to his subjects. The lady was seized, delivered over to the executioner, and publicly whipped through the streets of Potsdam. This cruel disgrace, of course, put an end to the concerts, and to her estimation in society. When Frederic came to the throne, she was reduced to the humble station of a hackney-coachman's wife; and, with a rare effort of gratitude and generosity, he was pleased to settle upon her a pension, of very little less than thirty-five pounds a-year.

There is nothing in the history of his after-life that shows any improvement in the feelings with which he began it, and which his own sufferings had not chastened, nor the kindness that relieved them softened. In one of his battles, happening to turn his head round he saw his nephew, the Hereditary Prince, fall to the ground, his horse being killed under him. Frederic, thinking the rider was shot, cried, without stopping as he rode passed, "Ah! there's the Prince of Prussia killed; let his saddle and bridal be taken care of!"

William Augustus, the King's elder brother, and

heir presumptive to the crown, had for many years been his principal favourite. He was a prince of great abilities, and singularly amiable character—modest almost to timidity—and repaying the friendship of Frederic by a more than filial devotion. He had served near his person in all his campaigns, had constantly distinguished himself in war, and, after the disastrous battle of Colin, was intrusted with the command of half the retreating army. While the King succeeded in bringing off his own division safe into Saxony, the Prince, attacked on all hands by the whole force of the Austrians, suffered several inconsiderable losses on his march, and gained the neighbourhood of Dresden with some difficulty. He was received, as well as his whole staff, with the greatest marks of displeasure. For several days the King spoke to none of them; and then sent a message by one of his generals—"*Que pour bien faire, il devoit leur faire trancher la tête, excepter au général Winterfeldt.*" The Prince was of too feeling a disposition not to suffer extremely from this treatment. He addressed a letter to the King, in which he stated that the fatigues of the campaign, and his distress of mind, had totally injured his health; and received for answer a permission to retire, couched in the most bitter and humiliating reproaches. From this time he lived entirely in the bosom of his family, a prey to the deepest melancholy, but retaining for the King his sentiments of warm attachment, and respect bordering upon veneration, although never permitted to approach his person. One interview only brought the brothers together after their unhappy separation. The different members of the royal family during the most disastrous period of the Seven-years' war, when the existence of the House of Brandenburg seemed to depend on a diminution in the number of its enemies, united their voice in exhorting the King to attempt making such a peace with France and Sweden as might be consistent with the honour of his crown.

Prince William was entreated to lay their wishes before him; and, oppressed as he was with disease, trembling to appear in his brother's presence, scarcely daring to hope even a decorous reception, he yet thought his duty required this effort, and he supplicated an audience. Frederic allowed him to detail fully his whole views, and was willing to hear from him the unanimous prayers of his relations. He appeared before the King; besought him, conjured him, with tears in his eyes, and embraced his knees with all the warmth of fraternal affection, and all the devotion of the most enthusiastic loyalty. No sentiment of pity for the cause he pleaded, nor any spark of his own ancient affection was kindled in Frederic's bosom at so touching a scene. He remained silent and stern during the whole interview, and then put an end to it by these words: "*Monsieur, vous partirez demain pour Berlin: allez faire des enfans: vous n'êtes bon qu'à cela.*" The prince did not long survive this memorable audience.

Such was the fate of his favourite brother. The Princess Amelia was his youngest and most beloved sister. She was one of the most charming and accomplished women in Europe. But after being cajoled by her elder sister, Ulrica, out of a royal marriage, which that intriguer obtained for herself, Amelia fell in love with the well-known Baron Trenck, who was by her brother shut up in a fortress for ten years; and Frederic daily saw pining away before his eyes his favourite sister, become blind and paralyzed with mental suffering, and saw it without a pang or a sigh, much more without a thought of relieving it by ceasing to persecute her friend.

Having contemplated this monarch in the relations of domestic life, it is now fit that we should view him among his friends.—Of these there was absolutely not one whom he did not treat with exemplary harshness, except Jordan, who indeed lived only a few years after

Frederic came to the throne, while he was too much occupied with war to allow him time for mixing with that select society, in which he afterwards vainly hoped to enjoy the pleasures of entire equality, and where always, sooner or later, the King prevailed over the companion.—Of all his friends, the Marquis d'Argens seems to have been the most cordially and most respectfully attached to his person. In the field he was his constant companion: their time in winter-quarters was passed in each other's society. At one time the King had no other confidant; and he it was who turned aside his fixed purpose to commit suicide, when, at the most desperate crisis of his affairs, life had become unbearable. But D'Argens committed the fault seldom pardoned by any prince, by Frederic never: he acted as if he believed his Royal friend sincere in desiring that they should live on equal terms. The pretext for finally discarding his ancient companion was poor in the extreme. When the marquis consented to come into Frederic's service, and leave his own country, it was upon the express condition that he should have permission to return home when he reached the age of seventy. He had a brother in France, to whom he was tenderly attached, and owed many obligations. As he approached this period of life, his brother prepared a house and establishment for his reception; and nothing was wanting but the king's leave to make him retire from a service to which he was now ill adapted by his years, and rendered averse by the coldness daily more apparent in the treatment he received. But Frederic, notwithstanding the bargain, and in spite of his diminished attachment to this faithful follower, peremptorily refused to grant his discharge: he allowed him a sort of furlough to see his brother, and took his promise to return in six months. When the visit was paid, and the marquis had arrived at Bourg on his return, the exertions which he made to get back within the stipulated time

threw him into a dangerous illness. As soon as the six months expired, Frederic, receiving no letter and hearing nothing of him, became violently enraged, and ordered his pensions to be stopped, and his name to be struck off the lists with disgrace. The account of these precipitate measures reached the marquis as he was on the point of continuing his journey after his recovery. And when he died, the king caused a monument to be raised to his memory, as a proof that he repented of his harsh and hasty proceedings against him.

The treatment which Marshal Schwerin met with for gaining the battle of Molwitz is well known. In order to execute the manœuvre upon which the victory depended, it was necessary that the king should retire from the field at a moment when success was almost despaired of. He consented, and the tide was turned by the consummate skill of the general. Ever after, Frederic treated him with marked coldness; neglected him as far as the necessity of claiming assistance from his genius would permit; and, finally, was the cause of his exposing himself to certain destruction at the battle of Prague, where this great master of the art of war fell undistinguished in the crowd, leaving his family to the neglect of an ungrateful sovereign, and his memory to be honoured by the enemy whom he had conquered.*

After Frederic had quarrelled with Voltaire, he heard of a Chevalier Masson, whose wit and accomplishments were represented as sufficient to replace those which he had just lost by his own vanity and caprice. It was with difficulty that this gentleman could be induced to quit the French service in which he stood high; and when he arrived at Berlin, though it very soon became apparent that Voltaire's place was not one of those which are so easily supplied, yet he

* The monument erected in the neighbourhood of Prague, upon the spot where the greatest of the Prussian Captains fell, was raised by the Emperor Joseph II

had qualities sufficient to recommend him, and was admitted instantly to the royal circles. A single indiscreet sally of wit ruined him in the king's favour. He retired in disgust to his study, where he lived the life of a hermit for many years, his existence unknown to the world, and the most important of its concerns equally unknown to him. As he had thus sacrificed all his prospects to accept of Frederic's patronage, and had wasted the prime of his life in attending upon his capricious pleasure, it might have been expected that he would at least have been permitted to enjoy his poor pension, so dearly purchased, to the end of his inoffensive days. But after twenty years of seclusion, such as we have described, he had his name suddenly struck from the lists, and his appointments stopped, and was obliged to seek his own country with the savings which his parsimony had enabled him to make.

The same selfish spirit, or carelessness towards the feelings and claims of others, which marked Frederic's conduct to his family and friends, was equally conspicuous in his treatment of inferior dependants, both in the relations of society and of business. In his familiar intercourse with those whom he permitted to approach him, we can find no line steadily drawn for the regulation of his own demeanour, or of theirs. His inclination seems to have been, that he should always maintain the manifest superiority, without owing it in appearance to his exalted station; but as soon as he lost, or was near losing, this first place in a contest upon fair terms, he was ready suddenly to call in the aid of the king. Thus it perpetually happened, that a conversation begun upon an equal footing, was terminated by a single look of authority from the royal companion. He never failed to indulge his sarcastic humour and high spirits in sallies directed with little delicacy or discrimination against all around him; and unless he happened to have, at the moment, such answers as might, without any possibility of resistance, crush

those whom his railleries had forced into a repartee, he was sure to supply the defect by an appeal to weapons which he alone of the circle could use. It is not describing his behaviour correctly, to say that in the hours of relaxation he was fond of forgetting the monarch, provided his company never forgot him. This would at least have been one general rule, one principle of behaviour to which all might conform as soon as it was made known. But Frederic laid down and took up his sceptre at moments which his guests could never divine; and, far from insisting that they should always have it in their eyes, it would often have been a ground for his using it to stop the colloquy, if he had perceived them persevere in addressing the sovereign, when he was determined they should talk to a comrade. The only rule then of his society, was entire submission to his caprices; not merely a passive obedience, but a compliance with every whim and turn of his mind; sometimes requiring to be met with exertions, sometimes to be received in quiet. That we may form some idea of the nature and extent of this meanness, so poor in one who called himself a Royal Philosopher, it is proper to remark, that all those wits or other dependents with whom he passed his time, were entirely supported by his pensions; and that, beside the dangers of a fortress, any resistance was sure to cost them and their families their daily bread.

His ordinary mode of enjoying society was, to send for a few of the philosophers who were always in readiness, either when he dined, or had an hour's leisure from business, which he wished to beguile by the recreations of talking and receiving worship. On one of these occasions, the savans in waiting were Quintus Icilius* and Thiebault; and it happened that

* This was a Leyden professor, originally named Guichard, who, being fond of military science, had been transformed into a colonel of chasseurs by the king; and then, from his admiration of Julius Cæsar's aide-de-camp, had been ordered to assume the name of Quintus Icilius.

the king, after giving his opinion at great length, and with his usual freedom, upon the arrangement of Providence, which conceals from mortals the period of their lives, called upon them to urge whatever could be stated in its defence. Quintus, unwarily supposing that he really wished to hear the question discussed, gave a reason, which appears completely satisfactory. The philosopher of Sans-Souci, however, only desired his guests to take the opposite side of the argument, in the conviction that they were not to invalidate his own reasoning. And when Quintus fairly destroyed the force of it, by suggesting, that the certain knowledge of our latter end would infallibly diminish the ardour of our exertions for a considerable period beforehand, the king thought proper to break out into a violent personal invective. "Ici," (says Thiebault, who witnessed the extremely curious but by no means singular scene), "la foudre partit aussi subite qu'imprévue." '*Cette façon de juger*,' lui dit le Roi, '*est bonne pour vous, âme de boue et de fange! Mais apprenez, si toutefois vous le pouvez, que ceux qui ont l'âme noble, élevée, et sensible aux charmes de la vertu, ne raisonnent point sur des maximes aussi misérables et aussi honteuses! Apprenez, Monsieur, que l'honnête homme fait toujours le bien tant qu'il peut le faire, et uniquement parce que c'est le bien, sans rechercher quels sont ceux qui en profiteront; mais vous ne sentez point ces choses; vous n'êtes point fait pour les sentir.*'*

At one of his literary entertainments, when, in order to promote free conversation, he reminded the circle that there was no monarch present, and that every one might think aloud, the conversation chanced to turn upon the faults of different governments and rulers. General censures were passing from mouth to mouth, with the kind of freedom which such hints were cal-

* Souvenirs de Vingt ans, vol. i. p. 84.

culated, and apparently intended to inspire. But Frederic suddenly put a stop to the topic by these words—"*Paix! paix! Messieurs; prenez garde, voilà le roi qui arrive; il ne faut pas qu'il vous entende, car peut-être se croiroit-il obligé d'être encore plus méchant que vous.*"*

These sketches may serve to illustrate the conduct of Frederic in society, and to show how far he could forget his station in his familiar intercourse with inferiors. As yet, we have seen only caprice, and that meanness, or, to call it by the right name, cowardice, which consists in trampling upon the fallen, and fighting with those who are bound. His treatment of persons employed in his service, and his manner of transacting business with them, presents us with equal proofs of a tyrannical disposition, and examples of injustice and cruelty, altogether unparalleled in the history of civilized monarchies. It is well known, that a large proportion of the Prussian army owes its origin to a system of crimping, which the recruiting officers carry on in foreign states, and chiefly in the distant parts of the Empire. As Frederic II. did not introduce this odious practice, he might, perhaps, be allowed to escape severe censure for not abolishing it generally; but there can be only one opinion upon his conduct in those particular cases which came to his knowledge, and where his attention was specifically called to the grievous injuries sustained by individuals. Of the many anecdotes which have been preserved, relative to this point, one sample may suffice. A French captain of cavalry, returning to his native country, after a long absence in the West Indies, was seized, in his journey along the Rhine, by some Prussian recruiting officers; his servant was spirited away, and he was himself sent to the army as a private soldier, in which capacity he was forced to serve during the rest of the

* Souvenirs de Vingt ans, vol. v. p. 329.

Seven-years' war, against the cause, be it remarked, of his own country. In vain he addressed letter after letter to his friends, acquainting them with his cruel situation: the Prussian post-office was too well regulated to let any of these pass. His constant memorials to the King were received, indeed, but not answered. After the peace was concluded, he was marched with his regiment into garrison; and, at the next review, the King, coming up to his colonel, inquired if a person named M—— was still in the corps. Upon his being produced, the King offered him a commission; he declined it, and received his discharge.

It was thus that Frederic obtained, by kidnapping, the troops whom he used in plundering his neighbours. His finances were frequently indebted to similar means for their supply. The King's favourite secretary, M. Galser, by his orders, caused fifteen millions of ducats to be made in a very secret manner, with a third of base metal in their composition. This sum was then intrusted to a son of the Jew Ephraim, so well known in the history of Frederic's coinage, for the purpose of having it circulated in Poland, where it was accordingly employed in buying up every portable article of value that could be found. The Poles, however, soon discovered that they had been imposed upon, and contrived to transfer the loss to their neighbours, by purchasing with the new ducats whatever they could procure in Russia. The Russians, in like manner, found out the cheat, and complained so loudly that the Empress interfered, and made inquiries, which led to a discovery of the quarter whence the issue had originally come. She then ordered the bad money to be brought into her treasury, and exchanged it for good coin. She insisted upon Frederic taking the false ducats at their nominal value, which he did not dare to refuse, but denied that he had any concern in the transaction; and to prove this, sent for his agent Galser, to whom he communicated the dilemma in

which he was, and the necessity of giving him up as the author of the imposture. Galser objected to so dishonourable a proposal. The King flew into a passion; kicked him violently on the shins, according to his custom; sent him to the fortress of Spandau for a year and a-half; and then banished him to a remote village of Mecklenburg.

Frederic acted towards his officers upon a principle the most unjust, as well as unfeeling, that can be imagined. It was his aim to encourage military service among the higher ranks: the commonalty he conceived were adapted for all the meaner employments in the state, and should not occupy those stations in the army which were, he thought, the birthright of the aristocracy. But instead of carrying this view into effect by the only arrangement which was reconcileable with good faith—establishing a certain standard of rank below which no one should be admitted to hold a commission either in peace or in war—he allowed persons of all descriptions to enter the army as officers, when there was any occasion for their services, and after the necessity had ceased, dismissed those whose nobility appeared questionable. Thus nothing could be more terrible to the brave men, who for years had led his troops to victory, or shared in their distresses, than the return of peace. After sacrificing their prospects in life, their best years, their health, with their ease, to the most painful service, and having sought, through toils and wounds, and misery, the provision which a certain rank in the profession affords, they were liable, at a moment's warning, to be turned ignominiously out of the army, whose fortunes they had followed, because the King either discovered, or fancied, that their family was deficient in rank.

We shall pass over the extreme jealousy with which Frederic treated all those to whom he was under the necessity of confiding any matters of state. Nothing, in the history of Eastern manners, exceeds the rigorous

confinement of the cabinet secretaries. But we shall proceed to an example of the respect which the Justinian of the North, the author of the Frederician code, paid to the persons of those intrusted with the administration of justice in his dominions. This great lawgiver seems never to have discovered the propriety of leaving his judges to investigate the claims of suitors, any more than he could see the advantage of committing to tradesmen and farmers the management of their private affairs. In the progress which he made round his states at the season of the reviews, he used to receive from all quarters the complaints of those who thought themselves aggrieved by the course of justice; and because he had to consider the whole of their cases in addition to all the other branches of his employment, he concluded that he must be a more competent arbiter than they whose lives are devoted to the settlement of such disputes. In one of his excursions, a miller, a tenant of his own, complained to him that his stream was injured by a neighbouring proprietor; and the king ordered his chancellor to have the complaint investigated. The suit was brought in form, and judgment given against the miller. Next year he renewed his application, and affirmed that his narrative of the facts was perfectly true; yet the court had nonsuited him. The king remitted the cause to the second tribunal, with injunctions to be careful in doing the man justice: he was, however, again defeated; and once more complained bitterly to the king, who secretly sent a major of his army to examine on the spot the question upon which his two highest judicatures had decided, and to report. The gallant officer, who was also a neighbour of the miller, reported in his favour; and two other persons, commissioned in the same private manner, returned with similar answers. Frederic immediately summoned his chancellor and the three judges who had determined the cause: he received them in a passion; would not

allow them to speak a word in their defence; upbraided them as unjust judges, nay, as miscreants; and wrote out with his own hand a sentence in favour of the miller, with full costs, and a sum as damages which he had never claimed. He then dismissed the chancellor from his office, with language too abusive to be repeated; and, after violently kicking the three judges on the shins, pushed them out of his closet, and sent them to prison at the fortress of Spandau. All the other judges and ministers of justice were clearly of opinion, that the sentence originally given against the miller was a right one, and that the case admitted of no doubt. As for the chancellor, it was universally allowed that the matter came not within his jurisdiction; and that he could not possibly have known anything of the decision. At last a foreign journalist undertook the investigation of the business; and being placed beyond the limits of the royal philosopher's caprice, he published a statement which left no shadow of argument in the miller's favour. As Frederic attended to what was written abroad, and in French, Linguet's production quickly opened his eyes. Not a word was said in public; none of those measures were adopted, by which a great mind would have rejoiced to acknowledge such errors, and offer some atonement to outraged justice. An irritable vanity alone seemed poorly to regulate the ceremony of propitiation; and he who had been mean enough to insult the persons of his judges in the blindness of anger, could scarcely be expected, after his eyes were opened, to show that pride which makes men cease to deserve blame, by avowing, while they atone for, their faults. Orders were *secretly* given to the miller's adversary, that he should not obey the sentence. With the same *secrecy*, a compensation was made to the miller himself. The three judges, after lingering many months in prison, were *quietly* liberated: the chancellor was allowed to remain in disgrace, because he had been most of all

injured; and the faithful subjects of his majesty knew too well their duty and his power, to interrupt this paltry silence by any whispers upon what had passed.

If this system of interference, this intermeddling and controlling spirit, thus appeared, even in the judicial department, much more might it be looked for in the other branches of his administration. It was, in truth, the vice of his whole reign; not even suspended in its exercise during war, but raging with redoubled violence, when the comparative idleness of peace left his morbid activity to prey upon itself. If any one is desirous of seeing how certainly a government is unsuccessful in trade and manufactures, he may consult the sketches of this boasted statesman's speculations in that line, as profitably as the accounts which have been published of the royal works and fabrics in Spain. But there are particulars in the policy of Frederic, exceeding for absurdity and violence, whatever is to be met with in the descriptions of Spanish political economy. We have only room for running over a few detached examples.

When a china manufactory was to be set a-going at Berlin on the royal account, it was thought necessary to begin by forcing a market for the wares. Accordingly, the Jews, who cannot marry without the royal permission, were obliged to pay for their licenses by purchasing a certain quantity of the king's cups and saucers at a fixed price. The introduction of the silk culture was a favourite scheme with Frederic; and to make silkworms spin and mulberry trees grow in the Prussian sands, no expense must be spared. Vast houses and manufactories were built for such as chose to engage in the speculation; a direct premium was granted on the exportation of silk stuffs; and medals were awarded to the workmen who produced above five pounds of the article in a year. But nature is very powerful, even among Prussian grenadiers. In the lists of exports we find no mention made of silk,

while it forms a considerable and a regular branch of the goods imported.—The settlement of colonists in waste lands was another object of eminent attention and proportionate expense. Foreign families were enticed and transported by the crimps whom he employed all over Europe for recruiting his forces; they received grants of land; were provided with houses, implements, and live-stock, and furnished with subsistence, until their farms became sufficiently productive to support them. Frederic called this supplying the blanks which war made in his population. His rage for encouraging the introduction of new speculations was quite ungovernable. No sooner did his emissaries inform him of any ingenious manufacturer or mechanic, in France or elsewhere, than he bribed him to settle in Berlin, by the most extravagant terms. When he found the success of the project too slow, or its gains, from the necessity of circumstances, fell short of expectation, he had only one way of getting out of the scrape; he broke his bargain with the undertaker, and generally sent him to a fortress; in the course of which transaction, it always happened that somebody interfered, under the character of a minister, a favourite, &c., to pillage both parties. Experience never seemed to correct this propensity. It was at an advanced period of his reign that he sent orders to his ambassadors to find him a general projector—a man who might be employed wholly in fancying new schemes, and discussing those which should be submitted to him. Such a one was accordingly procured, and tempted, by large bribes, to settle at Potsdam.

Frederic's grand instrument in political economy was the establishment of monopolies. Whether an art was to be encouraged, or a public taste modified, or a revenue gleaned, or the balance of trade adjusted, a monopoly was the expedient. Thus the exclusive privilege was granted to one family, of supplying Berlin and Potsdam with firewood; the price was instantly

doubled; and the king received no more than eight thousand a-year of the profits. Well did the celebrated Helvetius remark of some applications for such contracts, upon which the king demanded his sentiments, "Sire, you need not trouble yourself with reading them through; they all speak the same language—'*We beseech your Majesty to grant us leave to rob your people of such a sum; in consideration of which, we engage to pay you a certain share of the pillage.*'" Frederic was led to conceive that his subjects drank too much coffee in proportion to their means, and ate too little nourishing food. The universal remedy was applied; and the supply of all the coffee used within his dominions given exclusively to a company. The price was thus, as he had wished, greatly raised, and some of the spoil shared with his treasury; but the taste of the people remained as determined in favour of coffee as before, and of course was much more detrimental to their living. Tobacco, in like manner, he subjected to a strict monopoly; and when he wished to have arms furnished very cheap to his troops he had again recourse to his usual expedient: he conferred upon the house of Daum and Splikberg, armourers, the exclusive privilege of refining sugar, on condition that they should sell him muskets and caps at a very low price. In all his fiscal policy, he was an anxious observer of the balance of trade, and never failed to cast a pensive eye upon the tables of exports and imports. "Every year," says one of his panegyrists, "did he calculate with extreme attention the sums which came into his states, and those which went out; and he saw, with uneasiness, that the balance was not so favourable as it ought to be."* After all his monopolies and premiums for the encouragement of production, he found, it seems, that the exports of his kingdom could not be augmented.

* Thiebault, iv. 127.

"Therefore," adds this author, "he had only one resource left—to diminish the importation;" which he accordingly attempted, by new monopolies and prohibitions.

It remains, before completing our estimate of Frederic's character, that we should recollect his public conduct in the commonwealth of Europe, where he was born to hold so conspicuous a station. And here, while we wonder at the abilities which led him to success, it is impossible not to admit that they belonged to that inferior order which can brook an alliance with profligacy and utter want of principle. The history of the Prussian monarchy, indeed, is that of an empire scraped together by industry, and fraud, and violence, from neighbouring states. By barter, and conquest, and imposture, its manifold districts have been gradually brought under one dynasty; not a patch of the motley mass but recalls the venality or weakness of the surrounding powers, and the unprincipled usurpations of the house of Brandenburg. But it was Frederic II. whose strides, far surpassing those of his ancestors, raised his family to the rank of a primary power; enabled him to baffle the coalition which his ambition had raised against him; and gave the means of forming, himself, a new conspiracy for the destruction of whatever principles had been held most sacred by the potentates of modern times. It is in vain that we dissemble with ourselves, and endeavour to forget our own conduct at that fatal crisis. We may rail at Jacobinism, and the French Revolution—impute to the timidity of the other powers the insolent dominion of Republican France—and exhaust our effeminate licence of tongue upon the chief, who, by wielding her destinies, made himself master of half the world. Europe suffered, and is still suffering for the partition of Poland. Then it was, that public principles were torn up and scattered before the usurpers of the day;—then it was, that England and France poorly

refused to suspend their mutual animosities, and associate in support of right, when other states, forgetting greater jealousies, were combined to violate the law;—then it was, that power became the measure of duty—that ambition learnt all the lessons which it has since been practising of *arrondissements*, and equivalents, and indemnities—that an assurance of impunity and success was held out to those who might afterwards abandon all principle, provided they were content with a share of the plunder, and that the lesson was learnt which the settlers of Europe practised in 1814 and 1815, the lesson which they again practised in 1839, of transferring from the weak to the strong whatever portion of territory it may please them to take, without consulting the wishes of the inhabitants more than the cattle that drag the plough through their fields. While we look back with detestation, then, on the conduct of those powers who perpetrated the crime, and most of all on Frederic who contrived it, let us also reflect, with shame, on the pusillanimity of those who saw, yet helped not; and, in justice to the memory of a truly great man, let us bear in mind, that he who afterwards warned us against the usurpations of France at their nearer approach, raised his voice against the dereliction of principle which paved the way for them in the Partition of Poland.*

The details into which we have entered, as descriptive of Frederic's character, may seem to be out of keeping in a sketch like this. But the universal belief of his greatness, and the disposition to exalt his merits because of the success which attended his ambition, render it necessary to reduce those merits to their true dimensions, which no general description could effect.

Upon the whole, all well-regulated minds will turn

* Mr. Burke.

from a minute view of this famous personage, impressed with no veneration for his character, either as a member of society, a ruler of the people, or a part of the European community. That he possessed the talents of an accomplished warrior and an elegant wit, it would be absurd to deny, and superfluous to demonstrate. He has left us, in his victories, and his writings, the best proofs; and all that is preserved of his conversation leads to a belief that it surpassed his more careful efforts. He ranked unquestionably in the first class of warriors; nor is it doubtful that the system by which, when carried to its full extent, Napoleon's victories were gained, had its origin in the strategy of Frederic,—the plan, namely, of rapidly moving vast masses of troops, and always bringing a superior force to bear upon the point of attack. His administration, whether military or civil, was singularly marked by promptitude and energy. Wherever active exertion was required, or could secure success, he was likely to prevail; and as he was in all things a master of those inferior abilities which constitute what we denominate address, it is not wonderful that he was uniformly fortunate in the cabinets of his neighbours. The encouragements which he lavished on learned men were useful, though not always skilfully bestowed; and in this, as in all the departments of his government, we see him constantly working mischief by working too much. His Academy was no less under command than the best disciplined regiment in his service; and did not refuse to acknowledge his authority upon matters of scientific opinion or of taste in the arts. His own literary acquirements were limited to the *belles lettres*, and moral sciences; even of these he was far from being completely master. His practice, as an administrator, is inconsistent with an extensive or sound political knowledge; and his acquaintance with the classics was derived from French translations; he knew very little Latin, and no Greek. To

his sprightliness in society, and his love of literary company, so rare in princes, he owes the reputation of a philosopher; and to the success of his intrigues and his arms, the appellation of Great:—a title which is the less honourable, that mankind have generally agreed to bestow it upon those to whom their gratitude was least of all due.

GUSTAVUS III.

The nephew of Frederic II. was Gustavus III. of Sweden, and he is certainly entitled to rank among the more distinguished men of his age. It was the saying of Frederic, "My nephew is an extraordinary person; he succeeds in all he undertakes;" and considering the difficulties of his position, the adverse circumstances in which some of his enterprises were attempted, his success amply justified the panegyric at the time it was pronounced, and before the military disasters of his reign.

He was born with great ambition to distinguish both his country among the nations of Europe and himself among her sovereigns. Inflamed with the recollection of former Swedish monarchs, and impatient of the low position to which the ancient renown of his country had fallen through a succession of feeble princes, he formed the project of relieving the crown from the trammels imposed upon it by an overwhelming aristocracy, as the only means by which the old glories of Sweden could be revived, and the influence of the Gustavuses and the Charleses restored. The king of the country, indeed, when he ascended the throne was its sovereign only in name. He had all the responsibility of the government cast upon him; he had all its weight resting upon his shoulders; he had all the odium of executing the laws to suppress sedition, to levy taxes, to punish offenders. But neither in making those laws nor in guiding the policy of the state, nor in administering its resources, had he any perceptible influence whatever. The

crown was a mere pageant of state, wholly destitute of power, and only supposed to exist because the multitude, accustomed to be governed by kings, required acts of authority to be promulged in the royal name, and because it was convenient to have some quarter upon which the blame might rest of all that was unpopular in the conduct of the government. The real power of the state was certainly in the hands of the Aristocracy, who ruled through the medium of the States, an assembly of nominal representatives of the country, in which the order of the nobles alone bore sway. The Senate in fact governed the country. In them was vested almost all the patronage of the state; they could compel a meeting of the Diet at any time; they even claimed the command of the army, and issued their orders to the troops without the king's consent.

When Gustavus was abroad on his travels, being then about 22 years of age, his father died, and from Paris, where the intelligence reached him, he addressed a Declaration filled with the most extravagant expressions of devotion to the constitution, zeal for the liberties of his people, and abhorrence of everything tending towards absolute government, or what in Sweden is termed "Sovereignty;" for the Swedes, like the Romans, regarded monarchy, except in name, as equivalent to tyranny. He vowed that "deeming it his chiefest glory to be the first citizen of a free state" he should regard all those "as his worst enemies who, being traitorous to the country, should upon any pretext whatever seek to introduce unlimited royal authority into Sweden," and he reminded the States of the oath which he had solemnly sworn to the constitution. Those who read this piece were struck with the overdone expressions in which it was couched; and profound observers did not hesitate to draw conclusions wholly unfavourable to the sincerity of the royal author. On his arrival in Sweden, whither

he was in little haste to return, he renewed the same vows of fealty to the existing constitution; signed the articles of the Capitulation tendered by the States in the usual form, articles which left him the name of king and the shadow of royal authority; absolved the States and his subjects from their allegiance should he depart from his engagements; and menaced with his "utmost wrath all who should dare to propose a single degree of addition to the present power or splendour of the crown." At his Coronation, which was postponed to the next year, he volunteered an additional display of gratuitous hypocrisy and fraud, when, having taken the oaths to the constitution, he exclaimed—"Unhappy the king who wants the tie of oaths to secure himself on the throne, and, unable to reign in the hearts of his people, is forced to rule by legal constraint!"

Thus did this accomplished dissembler contrive, for above a year and a-half, to keep up the appearance of a constitutional king, while in all his works and actions he affected the republican, and even overdid the part. At length his preparations being completed, he cast the mask away, excited an insurrection of troops in two distant fortresses to distract the senate's attention, and having gained over the regiments in the capital, secured the persons of the senators, assembled the other Estates in a hall surrounded with soldiery, and against which guns were planted and men stationed with lighted matches, while he dictated a new constitution, vesting absolute power in the crown, and annihilating the influence of both the nobility and the representatives of the people. This outrageous act of combined treachery and violence he concluded as he had begun with the mockery of oaths, and the most extravagant cant of piety. He swore to the new constitution; he invoked the Divine blessings on it in an hypocritical prayer; and he ended by ordering all present to sing a psalm, of

which he gave out the first line and led the air. Certainly so gross an instance of sustained falsehood and fraud, in all its departments, was never either before or since exhibited by any even of the royal hypocrites who have at various times encroached, by stratagem and by perjury, upon the liberties of mankind.

It is fit that the history of this transaction should be set forth in its own hateful colours, because it both was at the time, and has been since, made the subject of great panegyric among the admirers of successful crime. Mankind will never be without oppressors as long as they act against their own best interests by conspiring against those of virtue, and make impostors of statesmen and tyrants of princes by transferring to success the praise that should be reserved for virtue, venerating fortune rather than prudence, and defrauding the wise and the good of their just applause, or suffering it to be shared with the profligate and the daring. A premium is thus held out for unscrupulous violence and unprincipled fraud, when the failure of the worst and the best designs is alone and alike condemned, and the means by which success is achieved are lost sight of in the false lustre that surrounds it.

But tried by a far lower standard than that of public virtue, the conduct of Gustavus manifestly fails. If nothing could more betray a base disposition than his consummate hypocrisy, so nothing could more show a paltry mind than the practising his fraudulent pretences when they were wholly unnecessary for his purpose. He might have plotted the overthrow of the constitution just as safely and with quite as much chance of success had he accepted the constitution in the ordinary way, and signed the usual Capitulation as a matter of course. No one objected to his title; while his father yet lived he had been acknowledged the next heir; his succession was certain on his father's death; and if anything could have directed suspicion to his hidden designs it was the pains he took, by his

extravagant professions of zealous devotion to Liberty, to show that he was plotting against her. He had nothing to do but to plan his operations in secret, and in secret to obtain the support of the four or five regiments by which he effected his purpose. All his vile canting, both in the declaration from Paris, and in the speech on swearing to the constitution, was utterly useless; it only showed a petty understanding as well as a corrupt heart.

Truly he was a profligate man in every sense of the word. He delighted in cunning for cunning's sake. He preferred accomplishing his ends by trick, and the more tricky any course was, the more dexterous he thought his pursuit of it, and the better he liked it. His abilities were unquestionable, but they were on a paltry scale; his resolution was undoubted, but he was placed in circumstances which enabled him to avoid running any great risks; for nothing can be more unwieldy than a Senate of sixty or seventy persons as directing a military force; and the mob was for him and against them. That he showed great coolness through the whole affair is not denied. He quietly effected the Revolution on the 21st of August, and retired to a country seat twenty miles from Stockholm, Ekolsund, afterwards the property of a Scotch gentleman, named Seton, whom he ennobled. We have seen there a line or two written by him on the window-shutter, with the above date, and purporting that, "On this day he had come there after the Revolution." When the supreme power was lodged in his own hands, although he maintained it without even a struggle, and afterwards still further extended it by a second breach of the constitution (which in 1772 he had as solemnly sworn to maintain, as he had the one which he then overthrew), yet there was nothing enlarged or successful in his administration of public affairs, nothing in his policy which showed an enlightened or well-informed any more than a liberal mind. Supporting an

East India Company, and prohibiting the use of coffee under severe penalties to encourage their trade in tea, or prohibiting French brandy to protect the distillation of a very bad spirit from corn, was the greatest reach of his genius for economical improvements; while, by his military expenditure and his fraudulent tampering, first with the coin and afterwards with the paper currency, which he issued in excess, he so reduced the standard, that soon after his death it was at a discount of nearly fifty per cent. below par. The bank paper kept its value; but with this he managed to interfere, and in a manner so scandalous that the history of royal profligacy presents no second example of anything so mean and base. An extensive forgery was committed in Hamburgh or Altona upon the Stockholm Bank by parties whom he employed and then gave up. The Bank having detected it in time was saved from ruin, though impoverished; and the agents in the infamous plot reaped the usual reward of those who suffer themselves to be made the instruments in the villanies of princes; they were punished because their principal was beyond the reach of the law, and they wandered abroad exiles for the rest of their days.

In his military capacity he showed talents of considerable extent, though, as in other respects, not of the first order. He was active, enterprising, prodigal of his person; but so little measuring his designs by his means, that he obtained for himself the reputation of being a restless prince rather than the fame of a considerable warrior; and was so little equal to form great and happy and well-considered combinations, that he never went beyond daring and brilliant failures. The absolute influence of Russia under the Aristocratic government having been put an end to by the Revolution, ever after 1772 Catherine was plotting to regain her ascendant, or to obtain by force a still more undisputed sway over Swedish affairs. To all her intrigues Gustavus was alive, and often succeeded in counter-

acting them; to all her insidious proposals he was deaf, seeing through their real object, as when she would have inveigled him into a partition of Denmark, Norway to become Russian, and Jutland with the Islands Swedish, he made answer, that "She should not put her arm round his neck to strangle him." Indeed there can be little doubt that she only wished to draw him into a snare by obtaining his consent, that she might betray him to Denmark, and join with her in destroying him. When, therefore, the terms on which these two profligate Sovereigns were with each other had become as unfriendly as possible, and he found Russia engaged on the side of Turkey in a very difficult warfare, he seized the opportunity of attacking her, and sailed with a fleet up the gulf of Finland, so as to threaten Petersburgh by his approach. His first operations were successful, though on a small scale, and in a degree far from decisive. A battle was then fought in circumstances so adverse to any such operation, that it seemed as much contrary to nature in a physical as in a moral view; for the channel was narrow, studded with islands, broken with rocks at every step, and defying all nautical skill to steer through unless with favouring weather, and without any other occupation than that of seamanship. Yet here did the hostile fleets engage for many hours, with immense slaughter on both sides, and so balanced a result, that each claimed the victory. The Russians, however, being greatly superior in numbers, kept the sea afterwards, and the Swedes retreated.

An opposition in the Senate interposed new obstacles to Gustavus's projects, and he treated this with his wonted vigour. Appealing for support to the other orders, and then surrounding that refractory and disaffected body with troops on whose fidelity he could rely, he arrested five and thirty of them, and abolished the Senate by a sudden change of his own constitution, and a new violation of his most solemn engagements.

His next campaign was thus freed from political embarrassment, but it was throughout disastrous. Defeated by sea, on shore he was still more unfortunate; his army, officers as well as men, refused to obey him; and he was reduced to the deplorable expedient, easily suggested by the rooted falseness of his nature, of amusing the people with fictitious accounts of his proceedings; but his fictions were so clumsy, that their self-contradictions betrayed their origin, and the honest Prince of Nassau was induced to complain formally of such a proceeding, bluntly and ineffectually reminding the monarch that such gross and apparent falsehoods were wholly unworthy a man who was always desirous of playing the warrior and the hero.

In these disastrous scenes, from the consequences of which Sweden did not recover for many years, and the effects of which long survived their author, it is admitted on all hands that his abilities were advantageously shown, but above all, that his courage was uniformly displayed in an eminent degree. It is doubtful if any capacity could have made up for the vast disparity of strength between the two parties who were thus matched in such unequal combat; but he often succeeded where an ordinary man would never have ventured; and although he could not be said to display first-rate talents for war, he yet had no reason to be ashamed of the part he performed in its operations.

In private life his profligacy was of the grossest description; and with the same preposterous folly which made him prefer the most crooked paths in order to show his cunning, he thought that his grand object of civilizing his dominions could be accomplished by patronizing the introduction of foreign vices from other climates among the hardy and sober children of the North. He was, however, a patron of the fine arts; greatly improved the architecture of his capital; established an opera on a respectable scale;

and encouraged some excellent artists, of whom Sergel, the sculptor, was the most eminent.

His personal accomplishments were considerable; his information was much above that of ordinary princes; and though he never attempted so much as his uncle of Prussia, nor possessed equally the superficial kind of learning which that prince prided himself upon, he certainly wrote a great deal better, and probably was not really his inferior in a literary point of view. His manners and address were extremely engaging, and he was greatly above the folly of standing on the dignity of his station, as his liberal, literary uncle, Frederic, always did; who, willing enough to pass for a wit among kings, was always ready enough to be a king among wits; so that when the wit was beaten in fair argument, he might call in the king to his assistance. Gustavus, though a far inferior person in other respects, was greatly above such mean vanity as this; ever showed sufficient confidence in his own resources to meet his company upon equal terms; and having once begun the discussion by admitting them to the same footing with himself, scorned to change his ground or his character, and substitute authority for argument or for repartee. It was the observation of a man well versed in courts, and who had seen much of all the princes of his time,* that Gustavus III. was almost the only one of them who would have been reckoned a clever man in society had he been born a subject.

The same spirit which he showed in the field, and in his political measures, he displayed equally in the various attempts made upon his life. The arsenals and museums of Stockholm have several deadly instruments preserved in them, which were aimed at his person, and in no instance did he ever lose his presence of mind, or let the attempt be known, which by

* Sir Robert Liston.

some extraordinary accident had failed. At last he fell by an assassin's hand. For some mysterious reason, apparently unconnected with political matters, an officer named Ankerstroem, not a noble or connected with the nobility, shot him in the back at a masquerade. The ground of quarrel apparently was personal: different accounts, some more discreditable to the monarch than others, are given of it; but nothing has been ascertained on sufficient evidence; and these are subjects upon which no public end is served by collecting or preserving conjectures. To dwell upon them rather degrades history into gossiping or tale-bearing, and neither explains men's motives, nor helps us to weigh more accurately the merits of their conduct, any more than to ascertain its springs.

The story of the fortunes of this prince presents no unimportant lesson to statesmen of the relative value of those gifts which they are wont most to prize, and the talents which they are fondest of cultivating. A useful moral may also be drawn from the tale of so many fine endowments being thrown away, and failing to earn an enduring renown, merely because they were unconnected with good principles, and unaccompanied by right feelings. The qualities which he possessed, or improved, or acquired, were those most calculated to strike the vulgar, and to gain the applause of the unreflecting multitude. Brave, determined, gifted as well with political courage as with personal valour, quick of apprehension, capable of application, patient of fatigue, well informed on general subjects, elegant, lively, and agreeable in society, affable, relying on his merits in conversation, and overbearing with his rank none that approached him —who so well fitted to win all hearts, if common popularity were his object, or to gain lasting fame if he had chosen to build upon such foundations a superstructure of glorious deeds? But not content

with being prudent and politic, he must affect the power of being able to deceive all mankind; wise only by halves, he must mistake cunning for sagacity; perverted in his taste by vanity, he must prefer outwitting men by trickery to overcoming them by solid reason or by fair designs; preposterously thinking that the greater the treachery the deeper the policy, he must overlay all his schemes with superfluous hypocrisy and dissimulation. Even his courage availed him little; because looking only to the outside of things, and provident only for the first step, he never profoundly formed his plans, nor ever thought of suiting his measures to his means. Thus in war he left the reputation only of failure and defeat; nor did the fame which he acquired by his successful political movements long outlive him, when men saw to how little account he was capable of turning the power which he had been fortunate enough to obtain by his bold and managing spirit.

For many years men observing the contrast which he presented to other princes in his personal demeanour, and dazzled with the success of his political enterprises, lavished their admiration upon him with little stint, and less reflection; nor would they, had his dominions been more extensive, and his actions performed on a less confined theatre, have hesitated in bestowing upon him the title of "Great," with which they are wont to reward their worst enemies for their worst misdeeds, and to seduce sovereigns into the paths of tyranny and war. But he outlived the fame which he had early acquired. To his victories over the aristocracy at home succeeded his defeats by the enemy abroad. It was discovered that a prince may be more clever and accomplished than others, without being more useful to his people, or more capable of performing great actions; and the wide difference between genius and ability was never more marked than in him. By degrees the eyes even

of his contemporaries were opened to the truth; and then the vile arts of treachery, in which it was his unnatural pride to excel, became as hateful to men of sound principles as his preposterous relish for such bad distinction was disgustful to men of correct taste and right feelings. Of all his reputation, at one time sufficiently brilliant, not any vestige now remains conspicuous enough to tempt others into his crooked paths; and the recollections associated with his story, while they bring contempt upon his name, are only fitted to warn men against the shame that attends lost opportunities and prostituted talents.

THE EMPEROR JOSEPH.

A GREAT contrast in every respect to Gustavus III. was presented by another Prince who flourished in the same age, Joseph II. In almost all qualities, both of the understanding and the heart, he differed widely from his contemporary of the North. With abilities less shining though more solid, and which he had cultivated more diligently; with far more information, acquired somewhat after the laborious German fashion; with so little love for trick or value for his own address, that he rather plumed himself on being a stranger to those arts, and on being defective in the ordinary provision of cunning, which the deceitful atmosphere of courts renders almost necessary as a protection against circumvention; with ambition to excel, but not confined to love of military glory; with no particular wish to exalt his own authority, nor any indisposition to acquire fame by extending the happiness of his people—although presenting to the vulgar gaze a less striking object than Gustavus, he was in all important particulars a far more considerable person, and wanted but little from nature, though certainly much from fortune, to have left behind him a great and lasting reputation. That which he did want was, however, sufficient to destroy all chance of realizing an eminent station among the lights of the world: for his judgment was defective; he was more restless than persevering; and though not at all wanting in powers of labour, yet he often thought of royal roads to his object, and leaving those steep and circuitous routes which nature has formed along the ascents, would fall into what has

been termed by Lord Bacon the paradox of power—desiring to attain the end without submitting to use the means. Success in such circumstances was hopeless; and accident contributed largely to multiply and exaggerate his failures, insomuch that the unhappy monarch on his death-bed exclaimed in the anguish of his spirit, that his epitaph should be—"Here lies Joseph, who was unsuccessful in all his undertakings." Men looking to the event, rated him very far below his real value, and gave him credit for none of the abilities and few of the virtues which he really possessed. Nothing can be more unjust, more foolish in itself or more mischievous in its consequences, than the almost universal determination of the world to reckon nothing in a prince of any value but brilliant talents, and to account worth of little avail in that station in which it is of the most incalculable importance. Nay, let a royal life be ever so much disfigured with crime, if it have nothing mean, that is, if its vices be all on a great scale, and especially if it be covered with military successes, little of the reprobation due to its demerits will be expressed, as if the greatest of public enormities, the excesses of ambition, effected a composition for the worst private faults. Even our James I. is the object of contempt not so much for the vile life he led as for his want of spirit and his deficiency in warlike accomplishments; and, if the only one of his failings which was beneficial to his subjects had not existed in his character, his name would have descended to us with general respect, among the Harries and the Edwards of an earlier age.

It was in some degree unfortunate for the fame of Joseph that he came after so able and so celebrated a personage as his mother, Maria Theresa. But this circumstance also proved injurious to his education; for the Empress Queen was resolved that her son, even when clothed by the Election of the Germanic Diet

with the Imperial title, should exercise none of its prerogatives during her life; and long after he had arrived at man's estate, he was held in a kind of tutelage by that bold and politic Princess. Having therefore finished his studies, and perceiving that at home he was destined to remain a mere cipher while she ruled, he went abroad, and travelled into those dominions in Italy nominally his own, but where he had no more concern with the government than the meanest of his subjects; and from thence he visited the rest of the Italian states. An eager, but an indiscriminate thirst of knowledge distinguished him wherever he went; there was no subject which he would not master, no kind of information which he would not amass; nor were any details too minute for him to collect. Nothing can be more praiseworthy than a sovereign thus acquainting himself thoroughly with the concerns of the people over whom he is called to rule; and the undistinguishing ardour of his studies can lead to little other harm than the losing time, or preventing the acquisition of important matters by distracting the attention to trifles. But his activity was as indiscriminate as his inquiries, and he both did some harm and exposed himself to much ridicule by the conduct which it prompted. He must needs visit the convents and inspect the works of the nuns; nor rest satisfied until he imposed on those whose needle moved less quickly than suited his notions of female industry, the task of making shirts for the soldiery. So his ambition was equally undistinguishing and unreflecting; nor did he consider that the things which it led him to imitate might well be void of all merit in him, though highly important in those whose example he was following to the letter regardless of the spirit. Thus because the Emperor of China encourages agriculture by driving, at some solemn festival, a plough with the hand that holds at other times the celestial sceptre, the Emperor of Germany must needs plough a ridge in the Milanese,

where of course a monument was erected to perpetuate this act of princely folly.

But of all his admirations, that which he entertained for the great enemy of his house, his mother, and his crown, was the most preposterous. During the Seven years' war, which threatened the existence of all three, he would fain have served a campaign under Frederic II.; and although he might probably have had the decency to station himself on the northern frontier, where Russia was the enemy, yet no one can wonder at the Empress Queen prohibiting her son from taking the recreation of high treason to amuse his leisure hours, and occupying his youth and exposing his person in shaking the throne which he was one day to fill. At length, however, the day arrived which he had so long eagerly panted for, when he was to become personally acquainted with the idol of his devotion. His inflexible parent had, in 1766, prevented them from meeting at Torgau; but three years after they had an interview of some days at Neiss in Silesia, the important province which Frederic had wrested from the Austrian crown. The veteran monarch has well conveyed an idea of his admirer in one of his historical works, which indeed contains very few sketches of equal merit:—"Il affectoit une franchise qui lui sembloit naturelle; son caractère aimable marquoit de la gaieté jointe à la vivacité; mais avec le désir d'apprendre, il n'avoit pas la patience de s'instruire." And certainly this impatience of the means, proportioned to an eagerness for the end, was the distinguishing feature of his whole character and conduct through life, from the most important to the most trivial of his various pursuits.

Although Frederic had a perfect right to look down upon Joseph in this view as well as in many others, and although there can be no sort of comparison between the two men in general, yet it is equally certain that, in one most important particular, a close resem-

blance may be traced between them; and the same defect may be found marring the projects of both. Their internal administration was marked with the same intermeddling and controlling spirit—than which a more mischievous character cannot belong to any system of rule. It is indeed an error into which all sovereigns and all ministers are very apt to fall, when they avoid the opposite, perhaps safer, extreme of indifference to their duties. Nor was he the more likely to steer a middle course, whose power had no limits; whose ideas of government were taken from the mechanical discipline of an army; and whose abilities so far exceeded the ordinary lot of royal understandings, that he seemed to have some grounds for thinking himself capable of everything, while he despised the talents of everybody else. Yet must it be allowed, that if all other proofs were wanting, this one undoubted imperfection in Frederic's nature is a sufficient ground for ranking him among inferior minds, and for denying him those higher qualities of the understanding which render beneficial such faculties as he unquestionably possessed. A truly great genius will be the first to prescribe limits for its own exertions; to discover the sphere within which its powers must be concentrated in order to work, beyond which their diffusion can only uselessly dazzle. But this was a knowledge, and a self-command, that Frederic never attained. Though the ignorance and weakness which he displayed, in the excessive government of his kingdom, were thrown into the shade by his military glory, or partially covered by his cleverness and activity, they require only to be viewed apart, in order to excite as much ridicule as was ever bestowed on the Emperor Joseph, whose system of administration indeed greatly resembled his neighbour's, unless that he had more leisure to show his good intentions by his blunders, and was guided by better principles in the prosecution of his never-ending

schemes. Like him, the Prussian ruler conceived that it was his duty to be eternally at work; to take every concern in his dominions upon his own shoulders; seldom to think men's interest safe when committed to themselves, much less to delegate to his ministers any portion of the superintending power, which must yet be everywhere present and constantly on the watch. Both of those princes knew enough of detail to give them a relish for affairs; but they were always wasting their exemplary activity in marring the concerns which belonged not to their department; and extending their knowledge of other people's trades, instead of forming an acquaintance with their own. While other monarchs were making a business of pleasure, they made a pleasure of business; but, utterly ignorant how much of their professional duties resolved into a wise choice of agents, with all their industry and wit, they were only mismanaging a part of the work, and leaving the rest undone; so that it may fairly be questioned whether their dominions would not have gained by the exchange, had their lives been squandered in the seraglio, and their affairs intrusted to cabinets of more quiet persons with more ordinary understandings.

But although these two eminent men were equally fond of planning and regulating, as they indulged their propensity in different circumstances, so their schemes were not pursued in the same manner, and have certainly been attended with different results. Joseph was a legislator and a projector. From the restlessness of his spirit, and the want of pressing affairs to employ his portion of talent, his measures were often rather busy and needless, than seriously hurtful; and as the conception of a plan resulted from his activity and idleness, he was still vacant and restless after the steps had been taken for its execution, and generally strangled it by his impatience to witness the fruits of his wisdom; like the child who plants a

bean, and plucks it up when it has scarcely sprouted, to see how it is growing. Thus it happened, that many of his innovations were done away by himself, while others had no tendency to operate any change. Those which were opposed, he only pushed to a certain length, and then knew how to yield, after mischief had been done by the struggle; but few of them survived his own day; chiefly such as anticipated, by a slight advance, the natural course of events. Frederic, on the other hand, was not placed in easy circumstances; he was active from necessity, as much as from vanity; he was an adventurer, whose projects must be turned to some account; not an idle amateur, who can amuse himself with forming a new scheme after the others have failed. Although, then, like Joseph, he could afford his designs little time to ripen, yet he contrived to force something out of them by new applications of power; thus bringing to a premature conclusion operations in their own nature violent and untimely. Hence his necessities, like his rival's idle impatience, allowed his plans no chance of coming to perfection; but while Joseph destroyed the scheme of yesterday to make a new one, Frederic carried it forcibly into an imperfect execution before it was well laid. Add to this, that the power of the latter being more absolute, and of a description the best adapted for enforcing detailed commands, he was better enabled to carry through his regulating and interfering plans against whatever opposition they might encounter, while his superior firmness of character, and his freedom from the various checks which principle or feeling imposed upon the Austrian monarch, precluded all escape from the rigour of his administration by any other than fraudulent means. Thus, the consequences of his too much governing, of his miserable views in finance, and of his constant errors in the principles of commercial legislation, are to be traced at this day through the various depart-

ments of the Prussian states. Nor can it be asserted in the present instance, that the powers of individual interest have sufficed to produce their natural effects upon human industry in spite of the shackles by which it has been fettered and cramped.

The intercourse between these two sovereigns which took place at Neiss, in 1769, was not their only meeting; they had another the year after at Neustadt; and here, if ever, the remark of Voltaire proved correct, "that the interviews of Sovereigns are perilous to their subjects;" for here was arranged that execrable crime against the rights of men and of nations, which has covered the memory of its perpetrators with incomparably less infamy than they deserved, the Partition of Poland. Although Joseph's mother was still alive and suffered him to share none of her authority, yet this negotiation, in which he undeniably was engaged, deprives him of all pretext for withdrawing from his portion of the disgrace which so justly covers the parties to that foul transaction.

It is certain, however, and it is a melancholy truth, that this abominable enterprise is the only one of all the Emperor's undertakings that ever succeeded. His less guilty attempt in Belgium, his harmless changes in Austria, his projects of useful reform in Italy, all failed, and failed signally, for the most part through the careless and unreflecting manner in which he formed his plans, and his want of patience in allowing time for their execution. His absurd fancy of being crowned King of Hungary at Vienna, instead of Presburg, and transporting the regalia out of the country, without the possibility of effecting any good purpose, offended the national pride of the Hungarians, and roused their suspicions of further designs against their rights to such a pitch, that for the rest of his reign he had to encounter the opposition of those upon whose protection his mother had thrown herself in her extremity, and who had sworn "To die for their King

Maria Theresa." His Flemish reforms, and indeed his attempts upon the liberties of the Flemings, ended in exciting an open rebellion, which convulsed the Netherlands at the time of his death. In a far nobler object his steadiness failed as usual, and his ill-digested and rash innovations rather confirmed than extirpated the evil he wished to destroy. He designed to suppress the Monasteries, to prevent Appeals to Rome, and to retain the power of Ordination and Deprivation within the country. But he proceeded in so inconsiderate a manner as to raise universal alarm among all classes of the Clergy, and even to make the Pope undertake a journey from Rome with the view of turning him aside from his projects, by showing their dangerous consequences. A courteous reception was all the Sovereign Pontiff received; and after his return to Italy, the Emperor rashly abolished the Diocesan Seminaries, reserving only five or six for the whole of his vast dominions; new modelled the limits of the dioceses, and altered the whole law of marriage, granting, for the first time in a Catholic country, the liberty of divorce. He removed at the same time the images from the churches, to show that he could, in trifling as well as graver matters, pursue the course of premature innovation, and that he was ignorant of the great rule of practical wisdom in government, which forbids us to hurt strong and general feelings where no adequate purpose is to be served, how trifling or absurd soever the subject matter may be to which those feelings relate. The removal of images, however, was far from the most trifling of the details into which he thrust his improving hand. He wearied out the clergy as well as their flocks with innumerable regulations touching fasts, processions, ceremonies of the Church, everything, as has been well observed, with which the civil power has the least right to meddle, and, it might be added, everything the most beneath a Sovereign's regard: so that Frederic used

not unhappily to speak of him as his "brother the Sexton" (*mon frère le Sacristain*). Every one knows how such freaks of power, the growth of a little mind, torment and irritate their objects even more than they lower the reputation and weaken the influence of their authors.

Having formerly, with a restlessness so foolish as in his position almost to be criminal, chosen the moment of the whole of his people being flung into consternation by his measures, as the fittest opportunity for going abroad upon a tour through France, where he passed some months in envying all he saw, and being mortified by its superiority to his own possessions, novelty being no cause of this journey, for he had been all over that fine country four years before—so now, after having refused the Pope's request, and proceeded still more rapidly in his ecclesiastical changes since the pontifical visit, he chose to return it immediately after he had given this offence; and he passed his time at Rome in vainly endeavouring to obtain the co-operation of Spain with his project for entirely throwing off all allegiance to the Holy See. A few years after, this wandering Emperor repaired to Russia, and accompanied Catherine on her progress through the southern parts of her empire. Here he met with a sovereign who resembled him in one point, and no more; she was devoured by the same restless passion for celebrity, and in her domestic administration undertook everything to finish nothing, how effectively soever she might accomplish the worser objects of her criminal ambition abroad. A witty remark of his connected with this weakness is recorded, and proves sufficiently that he could mark in another what he was unable to correct in himself. She had laid the first stone of a city, to be called by her name, and she requested him to lay the second. "I have begun and finished," said he, "a great work with the Empress. She laid the first stone of a city and I laid the last, all in one day."

His excessive admiration of Frederic, combined with his thirst of military glory, in the war of the Bavarian succession 1778, had the effect of neutralizing each other. He preferred corresponding to fighting with his adversary, who called it a campaign of the pen. Under the mediation of France peace was speedily restored, after an active an vigorous interchange of letters for some months, and with no other result. But the war with the Turks, into which Catherine inveigled him, was of a very different character. With them no written compositions could produce any effect; and a series of disasters ensued, which ended in the enemy menacing Vienna itself, after overrunning all Lower Hungary. It was in vain that he endeavoured to rally his defeated troops, or win back victory to his standard by the most indiscriminate severity; cashiering officers by the platoon, and shooting men by the regiment, until at length old Marshal Laudohn came forth from his retirement, and the men, animated by the sight of their ancient chief, repulsed the enemy, resumed the offensive, and forced Belgrade to capitulate without a siege. At this critical moment, and ere yet he could taste the pleasure, to him so novel, of success, death closed his eyes upon the ruin of his affairs in Belgium, their inextricable embarrassment at home, the death of a sister-in-law (first wife of Leopold), to whom he was tenderly attached, and the unwonted, perhaps unexpected, gleam of prosperity in the Turkish campaign. He died in the flower of his age, and almost at the summit of the confusion created by his restless folly,—a sad instance how much mischief a prince may do to others, and how great vexation inflict upon himself, by attempting, in mediocrity of resources, things which only a great capacity can hope to execute.

The volume which records the transactions of statesmen often suggests the remark that the success of mediocrity, both in public and in private life, affords

a valuable lesson to the world, a lesson the more extensively useful, because the example is calculated to operate upon a far more enlarged scale than the feats of rare endowments. In private individuals, moderate talents, however misused by disproportioned ambition, can produce little harm, except in exposing the folly and presumption of their possessors. But in princes, moderate talents, unaccompanied with discretion and modesty, are calculated to spread the greatest misery over whole nations. The pursuit of renown, when confined to maladministration at home, is extremely mischievous; leading to restless love of change for change's sake, attempts to acquire celebrity by undertakings which are above the reach of him who makes them, and which involve the community in the consequences of their failure. But the fear always is, that this restless temper, unsustained by adequate capacity, may lead to indulging in the Great Sport of Kings, and that wars, even when successful most hurtful to the state, will be waged, without any fair chance of avoiding discomfiture and disgrace. Hence a greater curse can hardly light upon any people than to be governed by a prince in whom disproportioned ambition, or preposterous vanity, is only supported by the moderate talents which, united to sound principles, and under the control of a modest nature, might constitute their safety and their happiness. For it is altogether undeniable that, considering the common failings of princes, the necessary defects of their education, the inevitable tendency of their station to engender habits of self-indulgence, and the proneness which they all feel, when gifted with a superior capacity, to seek dominion or fame by martial deeds, there is far more safety in nations being ruled by sovereigns of humble talents, if these are only accompanied with an ambition proportionably moderate.

THE EMPRESS CATHERINE.

THE two male conspirators against the liberties of mankind, the rights of nations, the peace of the world, have now been painted, but in colours far more subdued than the natural hues of their crime. It remains that the most profligate of the three should be portrayed, and she a woman!—but a woman in whom the lust of power, united with the more vulgar profligacy of our kind, had effaced all traces of the softer nature that marks the sex, and left an image of commanding talents and prodigious firmness of soul, the capacities which constitute a great character, blended with unrelenting fierceness of disposition, unscrupulous proneness to fraud, unrestrained indulgence of the passions, all the weakness and all the wickedness which can debase the worst of the human race.

The Princess Sophia of Anhalt Zerbst, one of the smallest of the petty principalities in which Northern Germany abounds, was married to Peter III., nephew and heir-presumptive to the Russian crown, and she took the name of Catherine, according to the custom of that barbarous nation. The profligacy of Elizabeth, then on the throne of the Czars, was little repugnant to the crapulous life which her future successor led, or to his consort following their joint example. The young bride, accordingly, soon fell into the debauched habits of the court, and she improved upon them; for having more than once changed the accomplices of her adulterous indulgences, almost as swiftly as Elizabeth did, she had her husband murdered by her paramour, that is, the person for the time holding the office of

paramour; and having gained over the guards and the mob of Petersburgh, she usurped the crown to which she could pretend no title whatever. To refute the reports that were current and to satisfy all inquiries as to the cause of Peter's death, she ordered his body to be exposed to public view, and stationed guards to prevent any one from approaching near enough to see the livid hue which the process of strangling had spread over his features.

The reign thus happily begun, was continued in the constant practice of debauchery, and the occasional commission of convenient murder. Lover after lover was admitted to the embraces of the Messalina of the North, until soldiers of the guards were employed in fatiguing an appetite which could not be satiated. Sometimes the favourite of the day would be raised to the confidence and the influence of prime minister; but after a while he ceased to please as the paramour, though he retained his ministerial functions. One of the princes of the blood having been pitched on by a party to be their leader, was thrown into prison; and when the zeal of that party put forward pretences to the throne on his behalf, the imperial Jezebel had him murdered in his dungeon as the shortest way of terminating all controversy on his account, and all uneasiness. The mediocrity of her son Paul's talents gave her no umbrage, especially joined to the eccentricity of his nature, and his life was spared. Had he given his tigress-mother a moment's alarm, he would speedily have followed his unhappy father to the regions where profligacy and parricide are unknown.

Although Catherine was thus abandoned in all her indulgences and unscrupulous in choosing the means of gratifying her ambition especially, yet did she not give herself up to either the one kind of vice or the other, either to cruelty or to lust, with the weakness which in little minds lends those abominable propensities an entire and undivided control. Her lovers never

were her rulers; her licentiousness interfered not with her public conduct: her cruelties were not numerous and wanton; not the result of caprice or the occupation of a wicked and malignant nature, but the expedients, the unjustifiable, the detestable expedients, to which she had recourse when a great end was to be attained. The historian who would fully record the life of the Czarina, must deform his page with profligacy and with crimes that resemble the disgusting annals of the Cæsars: but the blot would be occasional only, and the darkness confined to a few pages, instead of blackening the whole volume, as it does that of Tacitus and Suetonius; for she had far too great a mind to be enslaved by her passions or merely mischievous in her feelings, although the gusts of the one carried her away, and what of the other was amiable had far too little force to resist the thirst for dominion, which, with the love of indulgence, formed the governing motive of her conduct.

Her capacity was of an exalted order. Her judgment was clear and sure; her apprehension extraordinarily quick; her sagacity penetrating; her providence and circumspection comprehensive. To fear, hesitation, vacillation, she was an utter stranger; and the adoption of a design was with her its instant execution. But her plans differed widely from those of her companion Joseph II., or even of her neighbour Gustavus III. They resembled far more those of her long-headed accomplice of Prussia. They were deeply laid in general, and for the most part well digested; formed as to their object with no regard to principle, but only to her aggrandizement and glory; framed as to their execution with no regard for the rights, or mercy for the sufferings of her fellow-creatures. Over their execution the same dauntless, reckless, heartless feelings presided; nor was she ever to be turned from her purpose by difficulties and perils, or abated in her desire of success by languor and delay, or quelled in

her course by the least remnant of the humane feelings that mark the softer sex, extinct in her bold, masculine, and flinty bosom.

In one material particular, and in only one, she seemed to betray her original womanhood, and ceased to pursue the substance after she had gone far enough to gratify her vanity with the shadow of outward appearances, and to tickle her ears with popular applause. Her military operations on the side of the East; her attempts at encroachment upon Turkey, whether by skilful negotiations with the Greek chiefs, or warlike movements almost decisively successful against Constantinople;* her measures in concert with Denmark against Sweden, and which only the interposition of England at Copenhagen, in 1788,† prevented from putting Finland in her possession; her share in the execrable Partition of Poland from the beginning of that crime down to its consummation in 1794—all these schemes of her vigorous and daring policy formed a strange contrast with those ebullitions of childish vanity, which laid the foundation of cities in a desert, never to be finished nor ever built above the corner-stone; or assembled upon her route through the wastes of her empire thousands of half-naked savages and clothed them with dresses to be transported in the night and serve the next day's show, while she was making a progress through her barren, unpeopled domains; or made the shells of houses be raised one week, along the road where she was to pass, destined the week after to tumble in premature but inevitable ruins; or collected groups of peasants where none could subsist, and had these same groups carried on in the night to greet her next day with another false semblance of an impossible

* Had her admirals pushed their advantages at Tchesme, the Porte was laid prostrate at her feet.

† Our ambassador threatened to bombard Copenhagen with an English fleet, unless the Danes instantly raised the siege of Gottenburgh.

population in another waste. Nor was there much more reality in her councils of lawgivers to prepare a Code for her vast empire, and her Instructions, supposed to be written by herself, for guiding their deliberations and assisting their labours. But then she had resolved to be the Semiramis of the North; she must both be the Conqueror of Empires, the Founder of Cities, and the Giver of Laws. But as it was incomparably more easy for an absolute sovereign at the head of forty millions of slave-subjects, with a vast, impregnable, almost unapproachable dominion, if ruled by no principles, to subdue other countries, than to improve her own, and to extend the numbers of her vassals, than to increase their happiness or their civilization, she failed in all the more harmless, or benificent parts of her schemes, while she unhappily succeeded in many of her warlike and unprincipled projects; and she easily rested satisfied with the name of civil wisdom, and the mere outward semblance of plans for internal improvement, while she enjoyed the sad reality of territorial aggrandizement through cruelty and violence. The court she paid to men of letters obtained a prompt repayment in flattery; and they lavished upon her never-ending, never-executed plans of administration the praises to which a persevering and successful execution of them would alone have given her a title. Pleased, satisfied with these sounds, she thought no more of the matter, and her name has come down to our times, though close adjoining her own, stript of every title to respect for excellence in any one department of civil wisdom, while her unprincipled policy in foreign affairs has survived her and still afflicts mankind.

A woman of her commanding talents, however, had other holds over the favour of literary men than the patronage which her station enabled her to dispense. Beside maintaining a kind of literary envoy at Paris, in the person of Grimm, she invited Diderot to St.

Petersburgh, and purchased D'Alembert's library; patronized the illustrious Euler, and gratified others of less fame by admitting them to the familiar society of a great monarch; but she also had abilities and information enough to relish their conversation, and to bear her part in it upon nearly equal terms. She had the manly sense, too, so far superior to the demeanour of Frederic and the other spoilt children of royal nurseries, that no breach of etiquette, no unbecoming familiarity of her lettered guests ever offended her pride, or roused her official dignity for an instant. Diderot used to go so far in the heat of argument as to slap her on the shoulder or knee with the "*emportement*" of a French "*savant;*" and he only excited a smile in the well-natured and truly superior person whose rank and even sex he had for the moment forgotten. Her writings, too, are by no means despicable; but the difficulty of ascertaining that any work published by an Empress-regnant proceeds from her own pen deprives criticism of all interest as connected with her literary reputation. The most important of her books, indeed, her Instructions to the Commission for composing a Code of Laws, published in 1770, makes little or no pretension to originality, as whatever it has of value is closely copied from the work of Beccaria. The great variety of her subjects is calculated to augment our suspicions that she made books as she made war, by deputy—by orders from head-quarters. Legislation, history, travels, criticism, dramatic pieces of various kinds, political and moral romances—all pass under her name as the occupation of her leisure hours, and the fruits of her prolific pen.

It would be unjust, however, to deny that science owes her important obligations. Her patronage of the Academy of Petersburgh was unremitting, and it was unaccompanied by undue interference, the great drawback on all public patronage of letters or literary men, which so often more than balances the benefits

it is calculated to bestow. Flourishing under her auspices, it gave to the world some of the most valuable of Euler's profound and original researches. The journeys of Pallas and Gmelin were directed and supported by her, and they explored the hitherto unknown regions of the Caucasus, ascertained their resources, and described their productions. Despatched by her orders, Billings explored the Eastern, and Blomager the Northern Ocean. Nor were some beginnings wanting under her reign to establish schools for teaching the more elementary branches of knowledge to her untutored people.*

Beside these worthy and useful works, she made some little improvements upon the judicial and financial administration of her empire, and corrected a very few of the more flagrant abuses, the produce of a darker age, which even in Russia could hardly stand their ground amidst the light of the eighteenth century. But the fragments of her reforming or improving schemes which alone have remained behind her, bear the most inconsiderable proportion to the bulk of the designs themselves; and of all the towns she began to build, the canals she planned, the colonies she planted, the manufactories she established, the legislation she chalked out, the thousand-and-one institutions of charity, of learning, of industry, she founded,—the very names have perished, and the situations been buried in oblivion, leaving only the reputation to their author of realizing Joseph's just though severe picture, of a "Sovereign who began everything and finished nothing."

On the whole, the history of princes affords few examples of such talents and such force of character on a throne so diverted from all good purposes, and perverted to the working of so much mischief. There

* The attention paid to education at the present day in Russia is truly praiseworthy; and might make nations ashamed that pretend to far greater civility and refinement.

have been few abler monarchs in any part of the world. It may well be doubted if there has been one as bad in all the important particulars in which the worth or the wickedness of rulers tells the most powerfully upon the happiness of the world.

The accidental circumstance of sex has sometimes led to instituting comparisons of Catherine with our Elizabeth; but the points of resemblance were few. Both possessed a very strong, masculine understanding; both joined to comprehensive views, the firm resolution without which nothing great is ever achieved; both united a vehement love of power with a determination never to brook their authority being questioned; and both were prepared, though in very different degrees, to sacrifice unscrupulously those whom they regarded as obstacles in the way of its gratification. Whether Elizabeth, in the place of Catherine, might not have become more daring, and throwing off all the restraints imposed by the Ecclesiastical and Parliamentry Constitution of her country, have attained by open force those ends which she was obliged to compass by intrigue, is a matter of more doubtful consideration. Certainly her reign is sullied by none of those atrocious crimes which cast so dark a shade on the memory of Catherine; nor can any comparison be fairly made between the act which approaches nearest the enormities of the Northern Tyrant, and even the least of those mighty transgressions.

The passions that most influence the sex, present remarkable points both of contrast and resemblance in the kind of empire which they exercised over these great sovereigns. The one was the victim of sensual propensities, over which she exercised no kind of control; the other carefully avoided even every appearance of such excesses. So differently were they constituted, morally as well as physically, that it is more than doubtful if Catherine ever felt the passion

of love, or Elizabeth that of sex, while the latter was in love with some favourite or other all her life, and the existence of the former was a succession of the grossest amours. But in this both pursued the same course, that the favourite of the woman in neither case ever obtained any sway over the Queen; and that the sensual appetites of the one, and the tender sentiments of the other, were alike indulged without for a moment breaking in upon the scheme of their political lives.

Their accession to the thrones of their respective kingdoms was marked by very different circumstances; the one succeeding by inheritance without a possible objection to her right, the other usurping the crown without the shadow of any title at all. Yet the sovereign, whose title was indisputable, had far more perils and difficulties to encounter in defending her possession, than she who claimed by mere force in contempt of all right. The religious differences which marshalled the English people in two bitterly hostile divisions, kept Elizabeth in constant anxiety during her whole reign, lest the disinclination of one class proving stronger against her than the favour of the other in her behalf, attempts upon her life or her authority might subvert a throne founded upon every ground of law, and fortified by many years of possession. Catherine had no sooner seized upon the crown of the Czars than all her difficulties vanished, and once only or twice, during her reign of between thirty and forty years, was she ever molested by any threats of a competition for her crown. It is due to the Englishwoman, that her admirable firmness and clemency combined should be recorded in these untoward circumstances. No alarm for her own safety urged her to adopt any cruel expedients, or to consult her security by unlawful means; nor did she ever but once seek a justification of lawless conduct in the extraordinary difficulties and even dangers of her

position. Catherine, who had walked to supreme power over her husband's corpse, easily defended her sceptre by the same instruments which had enabled her to grasp it. The single instance in which Elizabeth shed a rival's blood for her own safety, admitted of extenuation, if it could not be justified, by the conspiracy detected against her life; and the times she lived in, rendering assassination perilous, instead of murdering her rival in a dungeon, she at least brought her charges openly into a court of inquiry, and had her tried, judged, executed, under colour of law before the face of the world.

In one thing, and in one alone, the inferiority of the Englishwoman to the German must be admitted; and this arose from the different circumstances of the two Sovereigns, and the feebler authority with which the former was invested. Through her whole reign she was a dissembler, a pretender, a hypocrite. Whether in steering her crooked way between rival sects, or in accommodating herself to conflicting factions, or in pursuing the course she had resolved to follow amidst the various opinions of the people, she ever displayed a degree of cunning and faithlessness which it is impossible to contemplate without disgust. But if there be any one passage of her life which calls forth this sentiment more than another, it is her vile conduct respecting the execution of Mary Stuart—her hateful duplicity, her execrable treachery towards the instruments she used and sacrificed, her cowardly skulking behind those instruments to escape the censures of the world. This was the crowning act of a whole life of despicable fraud and hypocrisy; and, from the necessity of resorting to this, Catherine's more absolute power set her free: Not that the Empress's history is unaccompanied with traits of a like kind. When her troops had sacked the suburbs of Warsaw, and consummated the partition of Poland by the butchery of thousands of her victims, she had the blasphemous

effrontery to celebrate a *Te Deum* in the metropolitan cathedral, and to promulgate an address to the people, professing "to cherish for them the tender feelings of a mother toward her offspring." It vexes the faith of pious men to witness scenes like these, and not see the fires of Heaven descend to smite the guilty and impious actors.

In the whole conduct of their respective governments it would be hard to find a greater contrast than is exhibited by these two famous princesses. While Catherine sacrificed everything to outward show in her domestic administration, Elizabeth looked ever and only to the substance; the former caring nothing how her people fared or her realms were administered, so she had the appearance of splendour and filled the world with her name; the latter, intent upon the greatest service which a sovereign in her circumstances could perform, the allaying the religious dissensions that distracted all classes of her subjects, and maintaining her crown independent of all foreign dictation. Assuming the sceptre over a barbarous people scattered through a boundless desert, Catherine found the most formidable obstacles opposed by nature to what was obviously prescribed by the circumstances of her position as her first duty, the diffusing among her rude subjects the blessings of civilization; but desirous only of the fame which could be reaped from sudden operations, and impatient of the slow progress by which natural improvement must ever proceed, she overcame not those obstacles, and left her country in the state in which it would have been whoever had filled her place. Succeeding to the throne of a nation torn by faction, and ruled by a priesthood at once tyrannical and intolerant, Elizabeth, by wise forbearance, united to perfect steadiness of purpose, by a judicious use of her influence wheresoever her eye, incessantly watchful, perceived that her interposition could help the right cause, above all, by teaching

each sect that she would be the servant of none while disposed to be the friend of all, and would lend her support to that faith which her conscience approved without suffering its professors to oppress those of rival creeds, left her country in a state of peace at home as remarkable and as beneficial as the respect with her commanding talents and determined conduct imposed on foreign nations.

The aggrandizement of the Russian empire during Catherine's time, at once the monument of her worst crimes and the source of the influence ever since exerted by her successors over the affairs of Europe, has been felt by all the other powers as the just punishment of their folly in permitting Poland to be despoiled, and by none more than those who were the accomplices in that foul transaction. It is almost the only part of her administration that remains to signalize her reign; but as long as mankind persist in preferring for the subject of their eulogies mighty feats of power, to useful and virtuous policy, the Empress Catherine's name will be commemorated as synonymous with greatness. The services of Elizabeth to her people are of a far higher order; it is probable that they owe to her the maintenance of their national independence; and it is a large increase of the debt of gratitude thus incurred to this great princess, that ruling for half a century of troublous times, she ruled in almost uninterrupted peace, while by the vigour of her councils, and the firmness of her masculine spirit, she caused the alliance of England to be courted, and her name feared by all surrounding nations.

If, finally, we apply to these two Sovereigns the surest test of genius in their exalted station, and the best measure of success—the comparative merits of the men by whom they were served — the German sinks into insignificance, while the Englishwoman shines with surpassing lustre. Among the ministers who served Catherine, it would be difficult to name

one of whom the lapse of forty years has left any remembrance: but as Elizabeth never had a man of inferior, hardly one of middling capacity in her service, so to this day, at the distance of between two and three centuries, when any one would refer to the greatest statesmen in the history of England, he turns instinctively to the Good Times of the Virgin Queen.

APPENDIX.

Elizabeth's Conduct to Mary, Queen of Scots.*

The whole subject of Mary's conduct has been involved in controversy, chiefly by the partizans of the House of Stuart after the Revolution, and somewhat also by the circumstance of the Catholic party in both England and Scotland taking her part as an enemy of the Reformed religion. Elizabeth's conduct towards her has also in a considerable degree been made the subject of political disputation. But it may safely be affirmed that there are certain facts, which cannot be doubted, which indeed even the most violent partizans of both those Princesses have all along admitted, and which tend to throw a great, though certainly a very unequal degree of blame upon both.—Let us first of all state those unquestioned facts.

1. It is certain that Darnley, Mary's second husband, was foully murdered, and equally certain that Mary was generally suspected, and was openly charged, as an accomplice in the murder, if not a contriver of the crime.

2. Yet it is equally certain that, instead of taking those active steps to bring the perpetrators to punishment, required both by conjugal duty and by a just desire to wipe off the stain affixed to her character, she allowed a mere mock trial to take place which outraged every principle of

* This Appendix has been added in deference to the suggestion of a friend, whose sound judgment and correct taste are entitled to command all respect, and who considered that an unjust view would be given of Elizabeth's conduct if no addition were made to the sketch in the text.

justice, while she refused Lennox the father's offers of evidence to convict the murderers.

3. Bothwell had only of late been admitted to her intimate society; he was a man of coarse manners and profligate character, universally accused and now known as having been the principal in the murder. No one pretended at the time seriously to doubt his guilt: yet immediately after the event she married him, and married him with a mixture of fraud, a pretence of being forced to it, so coarse, that it could deceive nobody, and so gross as only to be exceeded by the still grosser passion which actuated her whole conduct.

4. That he was a married man when their intimacy began, is not denied. Nor is it doubted that she consented to marry him before his former marriage had been dissolved.

5. The divorce which dissolved it was hurried through the Courts in four days, by the grossest fraud and collusion between the parties. Hence Mary was as much guilty of bigamy in marrying him as was the Duchess of Kingston two centuries later; for the Duchess produced also a sentence of the Ecclesiastical Court in her defence, obtained with incomparably greater formality—but obtained through collusion, and therefore considered as a nullity—and she was accordingly convicted of the felony.

6. These acts of Mary's were of so abominable a nature that all rational men were turned away from supporting her, and her deposition was almost a matter of course in any Christian or indeed in any civilized country.

But as regards Elizabeth:—

1. When Mary took refuge in England, all her previous misconduct gave Elizabeth no kind of title to detain her as a prisoner, nor any right even to deliver her up as a prisoner at the request of the Scots, had they demanded her.

2. In keeping her a prisoner for twenty years under various pretexts, Elizabeth gave her ample licence and complete justification for whatever designs she might form to regain her liberty.

3. The conspiracy of Norfolk looked only to the maintaining of her strict rights, the restoration of her personal liberty, and her marriage with that ill-fated nobleman, which she was willing to solemnize as soon as she could be

divorced from Bothwell, who having lived for some years as a pirate, afterwards died mad in a Danish prison.

4. Babington's conspiracy included rebellion and also the assassination of Elizabeth; and great and certainly very fruitless pains are taken by Mary's partizans, to rebut the proofs of her having joined in it. She, indeed, never pretended to resist the proof that she was a party to the conspiracy in general; she only denied her knowledge of the projected assassination. But supposing her to have been also cognizant of that, it seems not too relaxed a view of duty to hold that one sovereign princess detained unjustifiably in captivity by another for twenty years, has a right to use even extreme measures of revenge. In self-defence all means are justifiable, and Mary had no other means than war to the knife against her oppressor.

5. For this accession to Babington's conspiracy, chiefly, she was brought to trial by that oppressor, who had violated every principle of justice and every form of law, in holding her a prisoner for twenty years.

6. Being convicted on this trial, the sentence was executed by Elizabeth's express authority; although, with a complication of falsehood utterly disgusting, and which holds her character up to the scorn of mankind in all ages, she pretended that it had been done without her leave and against her will, and basely ruined the unfortunate man who, yielding to her commands, had conveyed to be executed the orders she had signed with her own hand.

The pretence upon which the proceeding of the trial may the most plausibly be defended, is, that a Foreign Prince while in this country, like all foreigners within its bounds, is subject to the municipal law, and may be punished for its violation. This, however, is a groundless position in law, even if the Foreign Prince were voluntarily here resident; for not even his representative, his ambassador, is subject to our laws, either civil or criminal, as a statute declaratory of the former law has distinctly laid down,* although at an earlier period Cromwell hanged one for murder. But if it be said that this part of international law had not been well settled in the sixteenth century, at all events it was well

* The Stat. 7 Anne, c. 12.

known then that no power can have a right to seize on the person of a Foreign Prince and detain him prisoner: and that, consequently, if so detained, that Foreign Prince owes no allegiance to the laws of the realm.

But although Elizabeth's conduct towards Mary Stuart is wholly unjustifiable, and fixes a deep stain upon her memory (blackened still more by the gross falsehood and hypocrisy with which it was thickly covered over), it may nevertheless be said that she merits the commendation of having acted against her kinswoman with open hostility, and sacrificed her by the forms at least of a trial, instead of procuring her life to be privately taken away. A little reflection will remove any such argument used in mitigation of her crime. That she preferred murder by due course of law to murder by poison, was the merit of the age rather than of the person. Two centuries, perhaps one, earlier, she would have used the secret services of the gaoler in preference to the public prostitution of the judge. But she knew that Mary's death, if it happened in prison, even in the course of nature, would always be charged upon her as its author; and she was unwilling to load her name with the shame, even if she cared not how her conscience might be burdened with the guilt. She was well aware, too, of the formidable party which Mary had in the country, and dreaded not only to exasperate the Catholic body, but to furnish them with the weapons against herself which so great an outrage on the feelings of mankind would have placed in their hands. Besides, she well knew that the trial was a matter of easy execution and of certain result. Mary was delivered over, not to a judge and jury acting under the authority of the law in its ordinary course of administration, but to forty peers and privy councillors, selected by Elizabeth herself, whose very numbers, by dividing the responsibility, made their submission to the power that appointed them a matter of perfect ease, and the conviction an absolute certainty. In every view, then, which can be taken of the case, little credit can accrue to Elizabeth for preferring a mode of destroying her rival quite as easy, quite as sure, and far more safe, than any other: Not to mention that it must be a strange kind of honour which can stoop to seek the wretched credit of

having declined to commit a midnight murder, rather than destroy the victim by an open trial.

If, then, it be asked upon what grounds Elizabeth's memory has escaped the execration so justly due to it, the answer is found not merely in the splendour of her other actions, and the great success of her long reign in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty, but rather in the previous bad conduct of Mary—the utter scorn in which all mankind held her except those whom personal attachment or religious frenzy blinded—the certain effect of time in opening the eyes of even those zealots, when her truly despicable conduct came to be considered—and chiefly in the belief that she, who was supposed to have joined in the assassination of her own husband, and was admitted to have married his brutal murderer while his hands were still reeking with blood, had also been a party to a plot for assassinating the English queen. These considerations have not unnaturally operated on men's minds against the victim of Elizabeth's crooked and cruel policy; and it is an unavoidable consequence of sympathy for the oppressed being weakened, that the hatred of the oppressor is diminished in proportion.

The foregoing statements have proceeded upon the plan of assuming no facts as true respecting the conduct either of Mary or Elizabeth, excepting those which are on all hands admitted, and which have indeed never been denied, either at the time or in the heats engendered by subsequent controversy. The result is against both those famous Queens; loading the memory of the one with a degree of infamy which no woman of ordinary feeling could endure, subjecting the other to the gravest charges of perfidy and injustice. But it would be giving a very imperfect view of Mary's conduct were we to stop at these admitted facts.

The proofs against her in respect of Darnley's murder, although not sufficient to convict her in a court of justice, are quite decisive of her guilt, when the question is propounded as one of historical evidence. Indeed it may be safely affirmed, that no disputed point of historical fact rests upon stronger evidence. The arguments to prove the letters genuine are not easily resisted. Mr. Hume's admirable summary of those arguments is nearly conclu-

sive. The other concurring circumstances, as the statements of Bothwell's servants at their execution, are also very strong. But above everything, her own conduct both in obstructing all search after the murderers, and in immediately marrying their ringleader, seems to place her guilt beyond a doubt. Even this, however, is not all. She submitted the case to a solemn investigation, when she found that the effects of her infamy were fatal to her party, clouding over all her prospects of success, or even of deliverance; and as soon as the worst part of the charges against her were brought forward, and the most decisive evidences of her guilt adduced, the letters under her own hand, she did not meet the charge or even attempt to prove the writings forgeries, but sought shelter behind general protestations, and endeavoured to change the inquiry into a negotiation, although distinctly warned that such a conduct of her case was flying from the trial to which she had submitted, and must prove quite demonstrative of her guilt.

On the whole, it is not going too far to close these remarks with Mr. Hume's observation, that there are three descriptions of men who must be considered beyond the reach of argument, and must be left to their prejudices—an English Whig, who asserts the reality of the Popish plot; an Irish Catholic, who denies the massacre in 1641; and a Scotch Jacobite, who maintains the innocence of Queen Mary.

It is, however, fit that a remark be added touching the error into which this justly celebrated historian has fallen, and which shows that he knew very little of what legal evidence is, how expertly soever he might deal with historical evidence. After enumerating the proofs adduced at the trial of Mary's accession to the assassination part of Babington's plot, namely, copies taken in Walsingham's office of correspondence with Babington; the confessions of her two secretaries, without torture, but in her absence, and without confronting or cross-examination; Babington's confession, and the confession of Ballard and Savage, that Babington had shown them Mary's letters in cipher,—the historian adds, that, "in the case of an ordinary criminal, this proof would be esteemed legal and even satisfactory, if not opposed by some other circumstances

which shake the credit of the witnesses." Nothing can betray greater ignorance of the very first principles of the law of evidence. The witnesses he speaks of do not even exist; there is nothing like a witness mentioned in his enumeration of proofs; and how any man of Mr. Hume's acuteness could fancy that what one person confesses behind a prisoner's back that he heard a third person say to that prisoner, or rather that this third person showed him ciphered letters not produced of that prisoner, could be anything like evidence to affect him, is truly astonishing, and shows how dangerous a thing it is for the artist most expert in his own line to pronounce an opinion on matters beyond it.

DIALOGUE.

REPUBLICAN AND MONARCHICAL GOVERNMENT.

In the latter end of autumn, 1848, the aspect of the political horizon was gloomy in almost every quarter, and in some parts exceedingly troubled. Nothing could be more precarious than the continuance of the tranquillity which France had enjoyed since the disturbances of June. The approaching election, indeed, of a President was expected to bring almost inevitably along with it conflicts disastrous to the public peace. For while no interest had been excited by the great work of framing a constitution, a work undertaken with most inadequate powers of just discrimination, and performed during the absolute dictatorship under which both the public and the Assembly lay prostrate—the personal question of who should hold supreme power and distribute patronage, engaged the whole passions of the people, of whom some supported the candidate most likely to serve their faction; others, the man likely to serve themselves; and not a few the individual whose name they happened to know, though, in many instances, believed to be his uncle, the Emperor, dead seven and thirty years ago. Then, all Italy was in an unsettled state; the north vainly expecting help from Piedmont, and even from France, while it reckoned upon the troubled condition of Austria; the middle disappointed in the reforming Pope at Rome, and excited by wretched agitators in Tuscany; and the south half quelled by the army of Ferdinand, yet struggling with revolt in Sicily. But the state of Germany was the most distressing of all;

for the wild romantic nature of the over-educated and under-rational Germans had given birth to scenes of rebellion, of anarchy, and even of massacre, hardly surpassed, except in extent, by the worst times of the French Revolution; and a dreadful conflict seemed impending over Vienna, to the possible destruction of that great city and the certain misery of its guilty inhabitants.

At this inauspicious period, far removed from these scenes of strife, we were calmly enjoying the delightful climate of Provence, its clear sky and refreshing breezes, while the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean lay stretched before us, the orange groves and cassia plantations perfumed the air around us, and the forests behind, crowned with pines and evergreen oaks, and ending in the Alps, protected us, by their eternal granite, from the cold winds of the north, but tempered the heat which, for want of the sea breeze, often becomes oppressive at this season of the year. We naturally enough were led to fill up much of our leisure with discoursing on the state of public affairs; the prospects of the more disturbed portions of the world; the enviable contrast which these found in the happy and solid security enjoyed by England under her mixed government; and these discussions generally ended in arguments for or against the schemes of liberty that usually go under the names of Monarchy and Republic. "Let us," I said one morning to my friend, "let us examine this important question in a somewhat searching manner, and see if there be nothing really settled—nothing that approaches systematic science in this the most important and the most practical subject which political reasoners can discuss." He assented to my proposal, and we thus began our conversation.*

* What follows, except the concluding portion, bears an older date; partly in 1840, partly at the beginning of 1848, at which time M. Arago was requested to allow his name to be used instead of Lord Althorp, lately

B. Are there not certain points on which we must needs both agree; certain admissions, as the lawyers say, which each may safely make, and thus narrow the ground of controversy, simplifying and shortening our inquiry?

A. I entirely approve of the proposal. We are neither of us talking for victory, but both in search of the truth, which is of the greatest possible importance, even in the consideration of other forms of government than pure republic and pure monarchy; and it is more essential to have the truth clearly ascertained in the present state of the world than at any former period, inasmuch as so many nations are now deliberating upon the frame of their government.

B. I must add to your last remark that the inquiry is further recommended in a peculiar manner by the advanced state of our experience. Before 1776, no experiment had been tried of a republic upon a large scale; for the Roman commonwealth, even admitting that aristocracy to be classed among republics, was confined to the city and its neighbouring territory; the rest of its dominions being rather like colonial establishments or conquered settlements until the Social war led to conferring the rights of citizens upon a portion of Italy, and even then the government was really vested in the city, whither all must resort who desired to enjoy any political rights.* The commonwealth in England was scarcely any instance; for the civil war continued all the time before the King's death, as indeed it did during the greater part of the

deceased, as one of the interlocutors; curiously enough, the letter, 23d February, crossed the telegraphic despatch that he was at the head of the new Republic. There is no reason to doubt that the arguments used for a Republic, as compared with Constitutional Monarchy, would have been fully adopted by him, certainly not by Lord Althorp—the latter had been taken as having been the interlocutor in the Dialogues on Instinct.

* The leave to vote in their own towns was first given by Augustus, and the rights of citizens generally was never extended to Cisalpine Gaul, that is beyond the Rubicon, till Julius Cæsar's time.

four years which elapsed between that event and Cromwell's usurpation. America then affords the earliest instance, indeed, the only one before 1792. But the American constitution was only tried upon a new country, with a thinly scattered population and an abundance of fertile land. It was not till the end of the last century that the experiment was tried upon an old and densely peopled country. We therefore, at the present day, possess far ampler means of discussing the question than our predecessors, the Lockes, the Sidneys, the Montesquieus, and the Humes, nay, we may add the Franklins enjoyed.

A. I perceive by your dwelling on this topic that one of the admissions to which you just now referred, regards the adaptation of a republican government to a small extent of territory.

B. Certainly, I conceive that a person may most consistently deny the advantages of republican government in general, and yet admit that it is applicable to a small community. For example, I don't see much reason to deny that a state like Geneva or San Marino, with five thousand families in the one, and not two thousand in the other, may conveniently enough be governed by councils which all have elected, while I can hardly doubt that such places are not well calculated for either an aristocratic or a monarchical regimen. I also have no difficulty in allowing that the arguments which so powerfully weigh with me for monarchy, have much less application to a new country like America while it is thinly peopled, before there exists any possibility of that body being called into existence which we term Natural Aristocracy, and where there is also of necessity an entire absence of the associations connected with antiquity and long possession; so that no institution can be what we call *time-honoured*, and no power in the state can plead anything like prescription.

A. I think, with you, that we do well to avoid, by

laying thus out of our view, these cases; they may be deemed extreme.

B. Certainly. For though an extreme case occasionally has its use in trying a principle; yet, in a practical inquiry, it is to be avoided, because those against whom you thus argue, make their escape by saying, "You are putting an extreme case." In truth, we are to deal with ordinary and average circumstances. I will therefore admit to you that a Sovereign would not do for San Marino or Lucca, and you may admit—

A. That a Commonwealth is not made for China.

B. But I will go farther to show my candour. I will take no unfair advantage by appealing to senseless prejudices and topics of mere declamation, nor will call names,—as leveller, socialist, communist, anarchist, atheist; nor pervert the text of ancient writers to snatch an advantage of authority—as did the French Encyclopædie (the article is by Chevalier Jaucourt), which, under the head of Republic, to show that such a form of polity cannot last, cites Tacitus. "Reipublicæ forma laudari facilius quam evenire et si evenit haud diuturna esse potest"*—leaving out the most material words of the passage—"delecta ex his et consociata"—that is, composed of three kinds, republic, aristocracy, and monarchy; so that Tacitus, on the very contrary, says the pure forms may endure, but not the mixed.

A. How D'Alembert must have shuddered to see his favourite classic so mangled in a work founded by himself, though, I believe, he had long ceased to interfere with the conducting of it.

B. But I will go farther in my fair attempts to place the question clearly and simply before us. I will at once admit that I can offer no absolute and permanent reason against a republican government even

* Annal. iv. 33.

for an old, or an extensive, or a densely peopled country. I can imagine men to have attained such a state of improvement as may render a republic not only safe, but the best of all governments for them. The only question I wish to discuss is how far it is fitted to the existing state of society. Let us, then, at least for the present, confine ourselves to that inquiry—to the world as we have hitherto known it.

A. I meet your candour with a like fairness. I will not reserve my strongest argument for the close of the discussion, but at once bring it forward, and place it in the front of my array. I object to monarchy because it places the happiness of society in the hands of one person, or at the disposal of his interests or his caprices; and as this is the extreme case of despotism, which, I presume, you will agree with me in thinking worse than any republican government, so in proportion as European or constitutional monarchy approaches that state, and departs from a commonwealth, it is liable to objection, though it is not of course so bad as the extreme case of despotism. This is the general objection to monarchy, and it absorbs, or if you will, eclipses all the particular ones. But I mean not to rest upon it; for it proves little. I will not, like the common run of controversialists, (who regard victory rather than truth) reserve my main argument. You shall have it at once and in the outset; for if you cannot defeat it, there is an end of the question; if you do, then I may fall back on other less decisive reasons. I object, then, to the power which is chief in the state being vested in a person whom blind chance points out; as if the names of all in the community were placed in an urn, and one drawn out at random to be Sovereign. I allude, of course, to the chance of birth. A knave as well as a virtuous man; a fool or a dunce; an idiot or a madman, may be King. An infant of six months old, as your Henry VI., and I may say ours also, may succeed to a crown in times of complicated

and arduous foreign war, as well as domestic trouble in both countries. If, as in most monarchies, women inherit, a girl of fifteen may be Queen, and it depends on her choice of a minister, possibly of playfellows, or of lovers, by whom the rod of empire shall be swayed. This is my prime, my main objection; and I hold it to be insurmountable more than any other.

B. I am far from pretending to underrate its force. But I must begin by reminding you, that though you have been more fair than controversialists usually are, in producing your main reason first, yet you have somewhat followed their course in slipping a *dătum*, a term, into your proposition when enunciating it. You say 'the chief power,' as if you meant the supreme power in the state. I don't deny that your argument has weight though you only call the Sovereign, a very great or important functionary, a chief magistrate. But I deny that you are entitled to hold him the depositary of the supreme power. If you do, you confine our inquiry to the case of despotism, and exclude all limited or constitutional monarchy. I entirely deny the assumption upon which you proceed, that the supreme power or any controlling and uncontrolled authority is vested in the sovereign unless in despotic countries. In England it resides in the Parliament, of which the Sovereign is one component part. So did it in the French Chambers with the King since the restoration of 1814. Even between 1789 and 1792 it was in the National Assembly and the King of the French jointly. Neither could act without the other's concurrence. I most freely admit that in a despotic government the objection you make is quite insuperable, and it is fatal. If any additional reason were wanting to prove that the worst of all governments, this would be sufficient. However, the evil, it may be observed, is in such a case so extreme, that it must remedy itself or force a remedy. Suppose the despot to be an infant, the government is at an end unless he be set aside, except

in a theocracy like that of the Grand Lama of Thibet, in which the Junta of Priests are really the government, and habitually set aside the nominal ruler. Or suppose the despot falls into manifest imbecility, or becomes more furiously mad than the ordinary average of his mental health—then he will be summarily set aside without the European form of a Regency Bill, and being either strangled or shut up for life, another will succeed to the sceptre. These are, however, extreme cases; the mischief may be incalculable both to the country and to the despotism itself (that is to the whole interests of the community) from a very weak and unfit ruler bearing sway; and, as by the supposition all or nearly all depends on him, the hazards to which the sum of affairs is exposed by the rule of hereditary succession are very great, and plainly prove, if any proof were wanting, the mischievous nature of such a system. But it is wholly otherwise in a limited monarchy. There the personal qualities of the Prince are of incomparably less moment. His vices can do less harm, as his virtues also are a less important benefit to the community over which he rules with divided sway.

A. I certainly will admit to you that the objection I am urging applies most strongly to a despotic government; for it is, in exact proportion to the power of the Sovereign, important that he should be a good one, hurtful that he should be bad. To express myself mathematically—if the movement M of the government is proportioned to F (s), a function of the Sovereign, it must depend entirely upon the value of s. But I will not admit that even where M is in proportion to F (s)×A×P, that is, to the combination of Sovereign, aristocracy, and people, the varieties of s are immaterial. Thus to express myself by an equation of partial differences $M=\frac{dA \cdot dP}{ds}$ or to the quantity differentiated by s, that is regarding s only as

variable. Surely it will be affected most materially by the variation of *s*. To come down from these heights of the calculus, don't you think that in a state governed by King, Lords, and Commons it signifies a great deal whether the choice of his ministers, and his generals, and his admirals, and his ambassadors be exercised by a very weak or a very able man—a very honest or a perfectly profligate and corrupt?

B. I don't deny that it is of some consequence; but the complete irresponsibility of the Sovereign and the perfect responsibility of his ministers who always act under the control of both houses of parliament as well as of public opinion, exceedingly mitigates the evil of a weak or a wicked Prince succeeding to the crown. He must, to govern at all, rule by his responsible servants. Be he ever so foolish, they must appoint fit generals, ambassadors, and viceroys. Be he ever so corrupt, their heads must answer for his betraying the country's interests. Suppose him desirous of giving a high place to a mistress's brother, or minion, or of selling such a place for money—his minister is to pay for the act of malversation, and must take care for his own sake to prevent it. In truth, it is exactly the great merit of a mixed government that it leaves so little to the hazard of individual qualification. The single possibility is, that all the Lords, or a majority of them, may by accident of birth be unfit for the exercise of their high functions; and when Mr. O'Connell used to call them hereditary pig-drivers, and compare the hereditary peerage to hereditary handicraftsmen, he might just as well have referred to another bare possibility, that of a majority of the Commons being chosen unfit for legislation; and indeed as they are chosen by proprietors, of whom a majority are such by inheritance, the possibility is almost, not quite, as great as of hereditary peers being the greater number incompetent. But both these chances are so very small as to be, practically speaking, impossibilities. Hence the

greater chance of the Sovereign being incapable is counteracted by the certainty of the other two branches of the government being competent.

A. I agree that in proportion as you enlarge the basis of your supreme power, you prevent the accidents of individual character or capacity from influencing the happiness of the community, because, according to the doctrine of chances, the probability becomes smaller in proportion to the number of trials, (or which is the same thing, the number of persons involved), of any event happening contrary to the design or plan. What is very possible, if one man is the pivot on which the event turns, becomes less probable if the concurrence of ten is the pivot, and impossible if it be the concurrence of a thousand all chosen for a particular purpose: and our republican notions are mainly grounded on this calculation. But still, as long as you allow that the Sovereign is not a mere cypher, so long must you admit the inexpediency of suffering mere blind chance to determine who he shall be, a knave or honest, wise or a fool. To take an instance; he is to choose his minister, the act most requiring wisdom and skill derived from experience; the Parliament refuses the man of his choice; he refuses the man preferred by the Parliament. Then, as some one he must have, he takes neither him he would himself choose, nor him the Parliament would desire.

B. And doubtless this is just the best result for the interest of the country.

A. That is not now the question; the question is whether a wise and good prince would not carry on the conflict with his Parliament more beneficially to the State, than a wicked or foolish one; and if you consider him to have any voice at all in the Government, to be anything more than a mere cypher, surely it is a great, a cardinal defect in the system that he is not chosen for his capacity or his virtue, but placed

at the head of affairs by the accident of birth, or if you will, only placed by that accident in a very important station, a station requiring capacity and integrity that its duties may be well performed.

B. In nothing that I have said can I be supposed to deny the importance of the first magistrate's functions, or to doubt the value of parts and virtues in securing a good discharge of these. My argument only goes to show that limited monarchy provides such checks and control, as render the personal qualities of the Sovereign much less material than otherwise they would be.

A. But is not the experiment somewhat clumsy, which, grounded on the admission of the danger of the evil arising from your mechanism, is satisfied with providing something that may counteract it, and prevent its proving fatal?

B. I agree with you if the plan was to make a piece of mechanism in itself dangerous. But the object of the mechanism is one thing, and another thing is the risk which is incidental to attaining that object; and against which we provide the means of counteraction by reducing its effects to their minimum. When steam was applied to produce motion, explosion was not the object of the mechanic, but power; yet it became manifest that in obtaining the power a risk of explosion was incurred, and the governor was invented by the great engineer to counteract that risk. It would have been absurd to employ steam merely for producing explosion, and at the same time to counteract the explosion. So we have important uses of hereditary succession; and fearing that it may expose us also to some risk of mischief, we rely upon the other parts of our system to render that risk as inconsiderable as possible. I quite agree that if after all the evil preponderates—if the benefits of hereditary succession do not overmatch and greatly overmatch its mischiefs—I am defeated and I must admit that we have paid too high a price for

the guarantee or insurance, compared with the value of the property insured.

A. You put the question fairly enough; and therefore you are now to state those benefits which you admit have a very grave inconvenience to counterbalance them.

B. Well then, I place my main argument, though certainly not my only one, in the front as you have done yours. I regard the advantage as inestimable of a known and certain rule for the selection of the chief magistrate; and none can be quite fixed so as to exclude all dispute, except hereditary succession, and succession absolutely fixed, and without any room ever left for a doubt. Thus were the family only of the chief magistrate fixed as in despotic governments, leaving the choice among the individuals, the benefit of a certain canon would not be gained. Even if the eldest were always to succeed with the exception of any one subject to a personal disqualification, the rule would be violated; because room would always be left for questioning if any given heir fell within the disqualifying description or no. We must have the succession fixed in the eldest, and on no account allow the possibility of any question as to the application of that rule. So no doubt of paternity or legitimacy must be suffered. *Pater est quem nuptiæ demonstrant*, must be the inflexible rule. Hence the sedulous care taken to establish the birth of our Princes, and frustrate all attempts at a warming-pan manœuvre. Louis XIV. of France, was exposed to some risk, it should seem, from one or other of these sources of doubt—either from his mother having borne an illegitimate son while living separate from her husband, or from Louis himself being one of twin brothers, and the order of his birth not being duly ascertained. You know this gave rise to the unhappy competitor being confined in yonder fortress of the Isle Ste. Marguerite.

A. Are you clear that this is the true account of

the Masque de Fer? There are other theories, and one by your friend Lord Dover, that he was Mathioli, a diplomatic agent of Modena, or Piedmont, I forget which.

B. Nothing can be more groundless than that explanation. The folly of considering any such agent of importance enough to justify the extraordinary precautions is manifest. Besides, no one can account for the careful concealment of the unfortunate man's face otherwise than by supposing that his likeness to Louis XIV. was striking, to say nothing of his always being served off plate, and the governor never sitting down in his presence. But, indeed, why seize the fisherman who picked up the silver dish on which the prisoner had written some lines, and keep him in close custody till it was ascertained he could not read it, if these lines did not contain a fatal disclosure? What disclosure could Mathioli make that signified a rush? But to return from this digression you have led me into, and which our sitting in view of the poor creature's prison well justified. The rule must be plainly, clearly fixed, quite inflexible. Its according with the general descent of property in the country is also highly desirable. Were Borough English the general law in our country, I should say the Sovereign ought to be the youngest of the heirs. One exception we no doubt make, but it is an easy and natural one, and is necessary if females are to reign. We make the eldest daughter succeed like an eldest son. But some of our north country manors, those called Tenant-right, have the same canon of descent. In Turkey and other Eastern countries, hereditary succession is imperfectly established, because the law of primogeniture is unknown. It is also more difficult to abide by any strict rule in a despotism, for the reason I have already given. In France, where females are excluded, the law of the monarchy varies from that of private succession; and I regard the exclusion

as a great defect, especially in a country which has never objected to be governed by a female regent, when the circumstance of a minority renders the task of government peculiarly difficult. But the advantage of a fixed rule is inestimable as long, at least, as men will run all risks for the possession of the foremost place in the state, and as long as the multitude of their countrymen are prone to band themselves in parties for helping or hindering their leaders in the pursuit of this object. England was desolated during the greater part of the fifteenth century in consequence of the nobles, their retainers, and the people at large, regarding the descent of the crown as the most important subject of contention that could arise. The two rebellions in the eighteenth century, with the contests of parties which, for the greater part of it, involved the whole country, proved that the experience of three hundred years had not made the people wiser, shall we say, or only more indifferent to such questions.

A. Do not such factions and such delusions arise from the very institution you are praising—the hereditary succession? Would they exist unless the devotion to that principle had become a generally prevailing prejudice in the community?

B. This proves really nothing against my position; it only shows that the adhering to this rule becomes a firmly rooted habit of thinking in the people, who are accustomed to live under it; and that while these fixed notions afford a strong security to the maintenance of the rule, they also of necessity render any deviation from it most perilous. These positions, indeed, are necessarily connected together, if they be not identical. I rather hold them to be one and the same. But admitting that the disputed succession occasionally arms party against party, and that it is an incalculable evil, see how rarely it can happen from the hereditary principle. The English monarchy has lasted since the Norman conquest, about eight cen-

turies, and we have had two disputed successions, each occasioned by revolutionary infractions of the rule—the one by Henry of Lancaster's usurpation; the other, by the nation setting aside one branch of the Stuarts for misgovernment. I reckon the attempts occasionally made to set aside the legitimate branch, and which failed immediately and signally, as no exception at all. But I pray you to reflect how many disputed successions we should have had in the same time if the selection of our chiefs had been left to any act of choice, whether by the people at large, or by any particular body of the people. If chosen for life, the chief's death would in prospect have caused endless intrigues, and on the event happening, a struggle generally ending in civil war would have ensued. But a republic never can confer a life interest upon its chief magistrate; jealousy of his power and his family renders that quite impossible. Thus, every four or five years must the struggle arise.

A. Your notions, as it seems to me, are all taken from royalty. You are thinking of the crown and sceptre, and so are led away by the idea that men will divide into parties, and each support its own candidate for the dazzling prize. In a republic it is not so.

B. It is useless to argue on the greater or the less degree of anxiety men may have for the chief place, or the degree of zeal with which their followers may support their pretensions. As long as men are men, not only will there be sufficient love of power and preeminence to engage the passions of the candidates for it, but there will be sufficient zeal in their adherents, both on account of party attachment, and to serve their own interests. I own at once that a civil war is not the risk I regard as most imminent in the choice of republican chiefs. While the state is unsettled, that, no doubt, is the great peril. But after it has once ceased to be in a revolutionary condition, other consequences seem more inevitable, and are most per-

nicious. In America, the whole people are kept in a universal canvass which lasts during the entire term of each Presidency. All offices are changed with each new President, even down to the letter-carriers of each village. Consequently, all men who look to place, and these, ever the most active members of each community, are fighting for their bread,—the party in power, to keep; those in expectation, to gain. I say nothing of the baneful effects of this on society; but see how hurtful it is to the public service. The best men are not chosen to fill the places upon the new Presidency commencing, but the best canvassers; and however ably and honestly any one may have demeaned himself in his office, out he goes to let an inexperienced person take his place. All public character, but also all private character, becomes the sport and prey of faction in each town, nay, each village; and a hamlet of fifty houses has its rival newspapers. Hardly is there a hatchet applied to clear a space for a new town, when a printing press is erected as affording a prime necessary of life. All this is mainly owing to the perpetual canvass in which the whole community habitually live. In no country that ever existed was individual reputation so precarious as in the United States. However, although this state of things is the main evil in America, I am very far from regarding the risk of civil war and of revolution as inconsiderable in a commonwealth of the more ordinary structure, as, for instance, in France.

A. We did not find much danger of this kind in our first Revolution. Men quietly enough submitted to the successive executive authorities.

B. I deny that it was anything like a quiet submission. The revolution of Thermidor dethroned the Decemvirs, (or, if you will, the Triumvirs), and an anarchy was established which would inevitably, in my opinion, have brought back the Royalist party but for the war then prevailing, and

the recollection of the dreadful scenes in the recent reign of terror, alike indisposing all men to move. The Directory was installed, and was borne with, as the Royalists would have been, owing to the dread of those frightful times recurring. Then a violent revolution in 1797 (18th Fructidor) ejected sixty Deputies and two Directors, giving the remaining three unlimited power. Their utter incapacity and scandalous corruption, enabled Napoleon to overthrow them after two years' gross misgovernment; so that there really was little time given for trying the experiment of an elective executive. I can have no doubt that in a country much distracted by hostile parties, the spirit of disturbance would always find vent at each election of the chief, and the certainty of a violent conflict of factions bring on the risk of a change in the form of the government. The majority of the people which voted in the provinces, for the renewed third of the Council of Five Hundred at the election of 1797, were Royalist and counter-revolutionary, and returned members of their own party. This it was that made the 18th Fructidor necessary to save the Republic. So would a majority now elect, if they durst, a Royalist chief in your new Republic; for you, all of you, confess now, which you formerly denied, that you have no republicans in the country. Then can you doubt but that there is the greatest hazard of the contending parties breaking out into open conflict at the next election, if for very shame of pulling down the Republic as soon as it is set up, they agree to do nothing of the kind now? Depend upon it, the benefit is inestimable of a system which takes so mighty a prize out of the lottery of political, aye, and of military ambition. Suppose all the army voted on any occasion for one favourite captain, where are you? But suppose, as is more likely, the army divided between rival chiefs, then where are you? It is only the choice between Cæsar's civil war against Pompey; and the

Prætorian guards giving away the empire afterwards. You may be assured, that as long as some men are ambitious, and others, their dupes, are led by them, and will even fight for them, so long the evils of elective sovereignty are quite enough to make us regard as the greatest of blessings a rule of hereditary succession. Mind, I am far from denying that monarchy may exist without hereditary succession. We have the lamentable instance of Poland to show it. But that is anything rather than an argument in favour of the Republican scheme; for the worst government that ever existed was only such because though only republican in the name, it borrowed from a republic, the institution which was in defiance of all monarchical principles.

A. I am quite ready to admit that the placing in the hands of the people the choice of their chief magistrate, is a great sacrifice made to preserve the rigorous purity of Republican principle. We don't conceive that a country can be quite free, in which the people obey a magistrate not of their own choice.

B. This seems to me a very great error, or if you will allow the expression, a blunder in your political philosophy. If the public liberty is protected from invasion, what harm can result from parting with the power of choice? Or allow that your liberty loses one safeguard by this arrangement, is it not very possible that it may gain as much or more than it loses? Thus all are agreed that judges should hold their office for life. Why so? Because there is only that way of making them independent. For no one can doubt that the existence of irremovable magistrates to a certain extent infringes general liberty; and hence the decree of your Provisional government, which all voices so loudly condemned, was not inconsistent with pure republican principles. So the giving the election of magistrates to the people was defensible on the same strict republican principles; and yet anything

more pernicious than elective or removable judges cannot be imagined. To avoid this curse all are agreed in the expediency, nay, the necessity, of giving up the popular control over the nomination of judges. Why not also give up the control over the choice of the chief magistrate?

A. There is much in what you say; but I perceive you are all along assuming that the election must be in the people at large. I do not at all consider this as necessary to pure Republicanism. Universal suffrage is necessary in the choice of Representatives, and can occasion little or no mischief while it secures the free commonwealth. But I by no means regard the people as fit to choose a chief magistrate any more than as capable of deciding on the measures of the government. They may choose men to represent them—and even men unfit to decide singly, will, when in a body, act with reasonable prudence and ability as representatives. But no man can seriously maintain that the people's uncontrolled choice should select the chief magistrate. Does not this admission mollify you towards our Republican principle?

B. I wont disguise from you that to a certain degree you do weaken the force of the objection. But you are very far, indeed, of getting rid of it. For, observe, you may vest the choice in an Assembly, as that of the Directory was in the Council of Ancients, (deciding on names presented by the Five Hundred), and yet you never can prevent the whole body of the people from taking an anxious, and oftentimes it will also be an active, part in the contest for chief power. What chance would there be of Paris remaining indifferent while the Assembly chose the President? Depend upon it, the Monarchical plan is the only safe one. Fix a canon of succession, and let it be sacred. The struggle will never arise who shall be chief magistrate, unless when other circumstances than a

mere vacancy in his place occasion a violent change; and then a revolution, of course, makes the exception to all rules, becoming a law to itself. Observe, that among a multitude of objections to elective chiefs, I have passed over, or but lightly dwelt on the two which I shall now state more plainly, and either of which I really think enough to determine the whole question. The election of a chief magistrate adds one great head to the already sufficiently hydra-formed spirit of faction, a head more venomous than all the rest; and then it involves the Chief in all the odium, and all the disrespect incident to a party leader. To regard only this latter evil, what can be a greater, than that he who should be the common parent should become only King of half his people? Is not the safety of the state connected with the due execution of its laws, and can that take place if he who enforces them is surrounded with the love and the respect of only a majority, it may be a bare majority, of his subjects? He is to appoint magistrates and to select captains; these will be followed with the good will of only half the country.

A. Your first objection applies to all party.

B. To a certain degree; but not nearly so strongly. Party violence in a monarchy never deprives of all consideration the honours bestowed by the crown, never interferes with the deference due to professional merit either in judges or in commanders. But in America, (and so will it be in Republican France, or England), one half of the people will laugh at the honours bestowed, distrust the persons appointed, and complain of every act done either in courts of justice, or should war unhappily break out, in the field. Indeed, honours, probably on this very account, are regarded by the Americans as wholly inconsistent with Republican government; and the attempt to establish an order of Cincinnati for those who had served in the Revolutionary War, and returned to the

plough, failed on this ground. It was apprehended that other persons would be inserted, and that the order would be continued. In France, you feel how inconsistent such things are with a Republic; but your love of titles and badges has subdued all scruples. The red patches, the ribbons dangling at the button holes, could on no account be got rid of, and you have now the most grotesque mixture that ever was seen — knighthoods, grand crosses, banners, stars, collars, in a Republic where equality is the shibboleth of the whole system, and all rank is abolished. A man cannot be called a count or a baron, but he may be called a knight, and he holds his knighthood for life, just as much as the peers since 1850 held their peerage for life. How can this ever work? How can the order conferred by a chief whom half the people are set against be reckoned an honour? Why should not the beaten candidate give ribbons and crosses to his followers as well as the successful one? He may have been beaten by a single vote. Nay, he may have the great majority of the electors for him, but not having the two millions required by law, the assembly may have chosen the other candidate in the teeth of the country. All these difficulties I leave you good Republicans to solve, and to settle as best you may. But we have been drawn aside from the first great head of comparison, hereditary succession as contrasted with election.

A. If we have on either side dwelt sufficiently on the question of succession, we may go on to the other points of comparison. We Republicans, as you have in some degree by anticipation remarked, hold the opinion wholly adverse to all power which is not derived from the people,—first deeming it inconsistent with liberty, next considering it as exposed to the certainty of abuse. We feel as Cicero felt, that freedom consists, not in having one kind of master rather

than another, but in having none at all;* or as the Greek orators and statesmen phrased it, referring, however, to national, not to individual independence, in the not doing any one's bidding.†

B. I am indeed well aware of the Republican fallacy, as I venture to call it, and I really think that I can easily expose it. Why should you not begin by the admission, and keep it steadily in view, that some government we must have for the sake of society, and to serve all the purposes of civil life? Then, surely, there is no more oppression, no more slavery, in submitting to a ruler, than in conforming to any other arrangement voluntarily made for the general good. If I submit to a ruler because I have voluntarily preferred this to a rude state, or, which comes to the same thing, because for various reasons I prefer this regimen to a Commonwealth, surely I am not oppressed by having what I voluntarily choose. But if my ancestors chose the system, I still yield to it, not as submitting to a tyrant, but because it was voluntarily adopted by the community I belong to; and I am no more aggrieved when I abide by the plan formerly adopted in the country, than I am defrauded of my property by paying the debts formerly contracted, or performing the obligations of the treaties formerly made. This is the very bond of civil society. What soldier in the times of your most furious rage for liberty was ever deemed a slave when he obeyed his officer's commands?

A. We have no objection to rules, but we abhor the rule which clothes any man, or any men, with high and transcendental authority.

B. I recur to the times of the Republic. You clothed five men with high authority. It is absolutely necessary, as long as men are men, to throw round rulers as much splendour and give them as much dis-

* Desunt omnino ei populo multa qui sub rege est imprimisque libertas quæ non in eo est ut justo utamur domino sed ut nullo.—*De Repub.* ii. 23.

† Πασιν ασυμφορον.—*Greek Orators*, passim.

tinction as will suffice to maintain their authority, and give them force to execute the laws. Men will not, as now constituted, obey other men on abstract principles which appeal to their reason. There must be an instinctive obedience from a sense of superiority and power. Obedience is not to be the result of argument and discussion—not to arise from persuasion, either generally or each time a command is issued. Do any of our soldiers consider themselves oppressed because they do not mess with their officers? Aye, do our lieutenants in the navy think themselves ill-treated because the Captain dines alone at his own table, while they mess together in the gun room? The Captain's authority would suffer were it otherwise; and, observe, I deny altogether that the difference of hereditary and elective title in the rulers can make the least difference in the present argument. Choose him and install him how you may, if you are right in holding with Cicero that liberty consists in having no master at all, you lose it under a consul, a director, a president, just as much as under a King or an Emperor; and Rousseau's silly notion will apply to republicans living under an elected sovereign as much as to England, when he most absurdly said that the English fancied themselves free, because they were so once in six or seven years at the general election. I quite comprehend the proud feeling of Equality that makes staunch republicans impatient of seeing any one raised so much above all other men, and loaded with honours which should only be heaped upon merit. But the most purely republican system never can possibly secure this union of virtue and station; for even if men of merit were always chosen the grievance exists, unless those who excel all competitors be always selected, and that is manifestly impossible. Nor indeed do I see how the elevation of persons already glorious by their deeds would tend to disarm envy. That feeling is often in reasonable men, always in the vulgar, excited even by

merit itself unaccompanied with exaltation; and it would always be remembered that the meritorious conduct was not the real cause of the person's elevation. He is clothed with power because the good of society, nay its very existence, requires a ruler to be appointed.

A. But my main argument is the second, which you have not touched,—the liability of power so vested to be abused.

B. This is an argument, I grant you, and one wholly unanswerable against a despotism, under whatever name it exists. But my contrast to a Republic is not a despotism. I freely admit that such a scheme has no advantage over a Republic; and my worst word against this last is that it often is despotic in substance, and always ends in a formal despotism, or at least an absolute monarchy. But I desire to know what greater liability to abuse of power there is in a monarchy than in a commonwealth? The sovereign is irresponsible, but his actions are all performed, nay his very speeches made, under the strictest responsibility. His ministers are answerable for them all; not an act can be done, or a declaration made, without one or more of his servants being responsible for it. Those servants, too, are the most distinguished men in the state, the men upon whom the weight of responsibility presses the most heavily, and which responsibility is therefore the more effectual. It is manifest, then, that abuse of power is as much excluded at the least, in a limited monarchy as in a republic.

A. But suppose the sovereign is minded to extend his power, and finds tools to assist him in his encroachments upon liberty, his infractions of the constitution,—he has so many means of protecting them in the execution of his orders, that their responsibility is lessened with the risk they run, till it becomes little better than nominal. He sets them on to criminal acts by the temptations at his disposal, and screens them by

the influence which his station gives him. He is the fountain of honour, the chief of the national force, and endowed with an ample revenue. All these means of corruption and intimidation, but let us only say corruption, he can employ to obtain the acquittal of his servants whom the same means may have induced to execute his unconstitutional orders.

B. I dont deny that this is possible; and the impeached minister may be acquitted. But think you that men are very fond of being tried, and happening to be acquitted? The arraignment is certain, the escape doubtful; therefore the annoyance and vexation are inevitable. The very knowledge that royal natures are not always to be relied on in extremities,—the recollection of Charles I. giving up his favourite Strafford—is likely to deter men from putting themselves in the power of the community and the prince—to keep them from running so great a risk for no object of their own. See how different in this respect is your republic!—There you must rely on individual responsibility. The chief may act illegally; he may make encroachments. Your only security after all is the responsibility of the ruler. And are all ambitious feelings extinct in such a state? The ruler himself is far more likely to run risks for his own aggrandizement, than King's ministers are for that of their master. Observe—that suppose one minister is impeached and acquitted, the example of his trial is by no means inoperative. How many Indian governors must have before their eyes the cruel injustice suffered by Hastings and Impey! Do you suppose that such trials, even if the prince succeeds in screening his servants, are without effect in deterring others from serving his ambitious views, when next he may try the experiment of overturning the constitution?

A. We republicans do not affect to believe that our rulers are above all temptations of ambition, and

will never attempt to break in upon the constitution; but we hold, that when the rulers are chosen for life, and leave their power to their children, they are more armed with the power, as well as more likely to have the desire, of overthrowing our liberties, than when they are only chosen for a few years, beside having the greater power of rewarding treachery from the expenditure of a large revenue, and the distribution of honours.

B. But you are not to forget that the very ranks which are appointed to surround a throne, the honours in distributing which the prince has so large a share, are themselves no less a protection to the constitution than to the prince. The aristocracy in England is sometimes too powerful for the king. Indeed, before the great Reform in 1832, we were wont to regard our government as fully more an aristocracy than a monarchy. However, be that as it may, the king with us who should attempt to extend his prerogative, would find much more resistance from the peerage, than help in his scheme. To be sure as against the people he also finds his security in the same body placed, as an intermediate force, between popular and regal encroachment. This has saved us the necessity more than once of resorting to violent measures; and, doubtless, the use of an aristocracy is principally to serve as a rampart between both prince and people—a dyke to prevent encroachments of either, and so to preserve the structure.

A. This is exactly the error you monarchy men, or anti-republicans, are ever falling into. You set up an idol, your constitution or mixed government, and mistaking the means for the end, you approve of whatever tends to preserve it. Thus you are for an aristocracy to interpose between prince and people. Why? The people could protect themselves, and the prince himself. It seems but a clumsy way of securing his obedience to the law to create an influence

which gives him power to break it, and then erect another body in order to benefit by that body's spirit of resistance. But then in comes your doctrine, that this balance protects both prince and people, and saves the whole constitution.

B. I grant that many of our reasoners have fallen into this error of mistaking for the end of all our political arrangements the existence of those checks to abuse, those securities against oppression on the one hand and disorder on the other, which are useful as a means only. Yet I am clear that there is an inestimable benefit in the mixture itself, or combination of powers, and that it deserves support and protection because of the benefits which it produces. Let us, if you please, come at once to this, the most important consideration of all, next to the one I began with, the avoiding civil war and periodical confusion by the hereditary scheme. We shall find that the course I recommend does not lead to anticipation, but gives the convenient means of discussing our subject.—I must assume as a fundamental position, that all power in the hands of men is liable to be abused, not merely by unlawful attempts at extending it, that is by usurpation, but generally and in every particular of its exercise. I must further assume that it is thus liable to be abused, whether in the hands of a single and hereditary chief or in the hands of a body selected from the rest of the people. All your republican schemes proceed upon this assumption just as much as your arguments against monarchy are derived from it. Indeed there is more likelihood of abuse when several persons hold the power, because the responsibility and the risk is divided.

A. But in a republic we proceed to remove the persons guilty of maladministration as well as of usurpation, guilty of acts detrimental to the state, whether in exceeding the limits set to their authority, or in any other way.—Our constitution must always provide for that.

B. Suppose you have as effectually as possible made such a provision.—Observe how certain it is that a considerable time must elapse before the officer or officers of the republic who have abused their trust can be displaced. All this time great injury is done to the state. But observe also, that during all this interval of time plans may be in progress for enabling the governing body to make encroachments and change the constitution, to stretch their power, and commit acts of oppression. You have not forgotten the Directory's proceedings in 1797, when they raised an alarm of Royalism having become prevalent in the Council of Five Hundred since the late election of a third part, (an alarm far from groundless); and by the disposition of the people, at least at Paris, to suffer extreme measures rather than see the Republic overthrown, they were enabled to seize a great number of the deputies, as well as two of their own body, and after carrying them through the country exposed like wild beasts in cages, to ship them off for the unwholesome marshes of Guiana, where many of them perished miserably. The Directors had been justly charged with malversation in many respects; this was doubtless one cause of the Royalist party's success at the election; and the answer of the Government, the defence made for it, was to hatch a plot for illegally and cruelly oppressing its accusers and their partizans, and packing the court or the jury by which the case was to be tried.

A. You are here giving a revolutionary movement, a *coup d'etat*, as an attribute of the Republic, whereas it was the suspension of the Republican constitution.

B. I shall come to the point connected with that remark presently, and an important one it is. But I am now only referring to what is unquestionably connected with the subject of responsibility, which we are discussing. I am reminding you of the facilities which rulers in a commonwealth have of escaping when they

have been guilty of malversation; they have both an inducement and a facility to violate, to suspend the constitution, which exists not in limited monarchies, because there the ruler is only responsible through his servants: both must join to infringe or suspend the constitution, and the regular course of the law is able to secure the punishment of the wrong-doer.

A. You have just now spoken of such violent measures as connected with an important point in the consideration of Republican government. As how?

B. The defect which meets us at every turn of this discussion, is the want of effectual responsibility in a commonwealth. Either the government is supported by the whole or nearly the whole country, or only by a majority. In the latter case alone can there be anything like responsibility. But what is it? The number of persons who must concur in all acts is so great, that the responsibility is divided and becomes really nothing as regards each individual. Suppose every man's vote on every question is known, and his incurring the displeasure of the community at large is the result of the errors or the crimes of the body, that is of the majority which adopted the measure; suppose, too, there exists the power of removing the whole of that majority from their offices, and of visiting them all with penalties either pecuniary or personal—what chance is there, practically speaking, of this course being pursued? Is not the mere fact of there having been a majority sufficient security against the law being put in force against them? Have they, supposing them to hold their places by popular election, more to dread than not being again chosen, or at most being turned out of the offices they have ill executed?

A. They are punished by loss of reputation, by incurring a great degree of public reprobation, which in a Republic is a severe punishment.

B. The ignominy, to give it the worst name it ever

can get, becomes absolutely nothing when divided with so many, and these forming the majority of the body. Each keeps the other in countenance—and observe that you cannot suppose if the majority of the elected body are the offenders, they will have no supporters among those who chose them. Suppose the majority of these electors to withdraw their confidence on account of the errors or malversation of the Council,—at least there will remain a considerable number of adherents, and the public reprobation, of which you speak, being divided, will have but a feeble operation in destroying the reputation of the wrong-doers. Depend upon it there is all the difference in the world between the effects of disgrace upon an individual, and upon a party. For all practical purposes it can hardly be said, in the latter case, to have any existence.

A. Then I ask what is, practically speaking, the responsibility of the ministers in your constitutional monarchy? You will admit that impeachment has long ceased to be a proceeding resorted to whensoever a minister mismanages our affairs. You reserve it for very rare occasions of great delinquency; cases indeed of breach of the law; and in these it has for a century and a-half never led to condemnation. But short of these there are many instances of profligate misconduct, of oppressive measures, of actual corruption, as well as undue employment of patronage, of extravagant squandering of the public money, of wars rashly undertaken and ill carried on—of that which I hold to be more than mere incapacity or error of judgment, the undertaking public trusts of great importance without the capacity required for performing the duties imposed, and thus sacrificing the great interests of the state to personal interests, or the mere gratification of vanity, called by a kind of euphuism, ambition or love of glory. In all these instances impeachment is out of the question—removal is the worst that can befall the offenders; and even this they

generally escape unless the party they belong to is defeated. So that I have continually observed your public men declare that their real responsibility is confined to being questioned in their places as Members of Parliament, and to their being injured in public opinion, that is to say, undergoing the disgrace of which you have just spoken, as having no existence when it is shared by others, and when those on whom the censure of the majority in the community falls, are sure of a portion at least of the people taking their part.

B. I admit much, if not all you say. You have, no doubt, stated what happens in a limited monarchy, and what must happen as long as party connexion exists. It is certain that responsibility is materially lessened by this; but it exists practically in a very different degree from the responsibility in a Republic. In the first place, impeachment is not obsolete; any minister committing an infraction of the law or even a malversation of which the courts of justice could take cognizance, would, in the former case certainly, in the latter probably, be impeached. As for the chances of acquittal, it is certain, as I have already stated, that some effect is produced by such cases as that of Lord Melville, whose impeachment was a party proceeding, he being only charged with irregularity, not with corruption, and Hastings, whose impeachment should have been confined to a single head, and was in its excess and its duration little less than oppressive and unjust. The effect of these proceedings, notwithstanding their results, was to make all future ministers and governors more cautious, more correct in their official conduct, than they had hitherto been. But next, in the cases to which you have referred as not being the subject of impeachment, see how much less responsibility falls upon the rulers of a Republic than upon the ministers of a Prince. It is as if the Prince and his servants were one; as if the

Prince alone were responsible; as if it were an absolute, though perhaps not a purely despotic government. The limited monarch will give up his minister, even his favourite, to be removed from office and exposed to public reprobation. The Chief of a Republic, any more than the absolute monarch, will not abdicate. Then how much stronger will the tide of popular opinion be against the servant than against the master! How great a proportion of those who condemn the Minister will avoid censuring the Sovereign! Just in the same degree will the Chiefs of the Republic be spared, while of their servants little or no account is taken; the whole power is in their masters; and recollect I am now assuming that there is considerable division of opinion—a preponderance only for the rulers; but in truth this can rarely happen. A Republican government supported by a bare, or even by an inconsiderable, majority can hardly continue its existence. There must be a very large, almost an overpowering, majority to make the conducting such a government practicable. And I dont speak of a majority in favour of the constitution as established; there must be for that so universal a predilection, such a resolution to maintain it, as would expose any one to destruction who should attempt its overthrow. But I speak of the persons appointed to administer its functions, in a word, the members of the executive government; and these must be supported by a great majority, else the whole movements of the state may at any moment be brought to a stand, and the action of the executive body paralyzed. In fact, the sudden removal of those rulers approaches very nearly to an organic change, to a subversion of the constitution. It is nearly as much a revolutionary measure. Now, if the rulers are the people's real representatives, if they are supported by the people, their responsibility is at an end; there is no check upon them; it is the people that rules in their person; and the people are answerable to no earthly power. Votes of censure and

resolutions to displace are equally out of the question. If the assembly, by whatever name called, were to venture on such proceedings, the rulers would treat them with contempt; and as to the disgrace of having been guilty of either maladministration or malversation, beside its being shared among several, if the executive be not entrusted to one, it could affect neither the single ruler nor the body, because the popular favour would be a full protection as well against blame as against removal. In this respect a democracy differs from all other forms of government. An absolute sovereign, in any civilized country at least, feels the weight of public censure, and is sensible of public approval. Even in a pure despotism, though public opinion goes for nothing, indeed cannot be said to exist, yet the ruler knows that men think and feel; he is aware that his cruelties and caprices rouse their indignation; that his infirmities awaken their scorn. The members of an aristocracy, though far less exposed to the same censures, because no individual is known to be the guilty person and thus made to bear it, and though they are numerous enough to support one another under the weight of popular hatred or contempt, nevertheless they cannot withdraw from the tribunal of the public; and the Venetian aristocracy itself, in the later period of its history, no longer retained its habitual contempt for the opinions of all beyond its own pale. But the people can never be under the influence of public opinion; that is, of the sense entertained of their conduct by the reflecting and respectable part of their own body. They can only dread the being despicable in their own eyes at a time of calm reflection; and this rather resembles the feeble check which conscience imposes on a tyrant or a patrician oligarchy than the restraining force of popular opinion. It would be quite as impotent were not men prone to distrust each other; so

that the people may possibly look forward when any proceeding is in contemplation to some of their own body afterwards reprobating it, and may thus take a timely warning against going on.

A. Your objections all end in the position that the people of any country are not to be entrusted with the management of their own affairs. Assume that the government is the community at large, representing their opinions and feelings accurately, your conclusions follow unquestionably as to checks and responsibility being at an end. But surely if a whole nation deliberately approves one set of rulers, and one set of measures, no one can deny that it has a right to live under those rulers, and to have those measures adopted.

B. In the *first* place, I deny that the approval implies much or any deliberation. Even in the choice of the men there may be much yielded to clamour, more to intrigue. In not a few instances, both as to men and measures, there may be a prevailing delusion, which a little time, and reflection, and inquiry would dispel; so that he who argues against the popular will being suffered to rule without control, by no means is to be counted as contending that the opinion formed on full and calm consideration, and the wishes thus entertained, may not fitly guide the government. But, in the *next* place, we are to consider not what the people desire, but what is most for their advantage; and the necessity of some constraint, some check, some arrangement to prevent hasty, ill-informed councils from working serious, possibly irreparable, injury to them, is exactly the inference that results from a survey of the consequences of unbridled democracy. But before coming to this most important head, I must revert to what I said of the manner in which the chiefs, or, it may be, the frame of the government, is occasionally changed in your republic. The errors, the corruptions, the oppressions of the rulers, the ruinous consequences

produced in the condition of the country as under your Directory, profligate, corrupt, and ill-considerate measures at home, defeat abroad, will awaken the people, and occasion a change, in the nature of a revolt against the persons, or a revolution in the system.

A. You perceive, then, that our republican scheme is not without its remedies for abuse. There are limits to the evils which may result from general want of responsibility. There are checks upon misgovernment; the machine can only get out of order to a certain extent; and though I agree that the remedy is a rough one, yet the knowledge that it may at any time be applied, will effectually keep the republican rulers from malversation. It is a check; it supplies the place of responsibility.

B. There is hardly an expression you have just used to which I do not entirely object. There are limits to the extent of the evils—Yes. But what incalculable mischief may be done to the community before these limits are reached! The machine if deranged to a certain extent provides for its readjustment—No. An external force interposes and violently changes it. There is none of the exquisite contrivance of our illustrious friend Watt in his governor, which was called into action in exact proportion to the occasion for it, and thus was not remedial but preventive; not an external force applied, but one provided by the working of the engine itself, and curiously provided by the very evil it was to remove, like the *vis medicatrix* in the human frame, by which the mischief creates the cure and the tendency to evil thus prevents its existence. But your republican remedies are of a very different description. You proceed by occasional explosions. It is as if Watt had used the explosive force of steam to produce motion, and only affixed the destruction of the engine as the limit beyond which explosion could do no harm,

by providing some means of escape for the workmen. Then as to the dread of this ultimate event, this extreme course, operating as a check to rulers, surely it is too clear to require an argument, that men are only influenced by the prospect of ordinary events, by the expectation of things happening in their usual course, and that the dread of a violent change will not exercise any influence on the conduct of rulers, merely because they know it to be possible—even if they believe it not to be unlikely. In what other position with reference to this event, and their own conduct as influenced by it, are the rulers of the Republic from the Sultan or other eastern despots, who know full well that other Sultans have been dethroned and put to death by conspiracies of courtiers or insurrections of the mob, who could no longer bear to be oppressed, but who submit to be always misgoverned and grossly injured, if no oppressive cruelties are committed? I recollect Lord Dudley describing a conversation he had had with a Russian nobleman travelling in England; and who, he said, "opened to him the checks provided by their constitution;" the principal of which was of course the putting the Emperor into confinement, or it might be to death. Alexander himself made a very rational as well as candid observation, to one who was flattering him with the praise of that form of government under such a prince—"If all you say were true, I should only be a fortunate accident." Now these imperial rulers, so it is generally allowed, have no bounds whatever to their power, by your argument they are subject to no control, and yet there is a check provided which arises from knowing that they may misgovern their countries into ruin, and their subjects into rebellion. None other control or check do the movements of 9th Thermidor and 18th Brumaire provide to republican misgovernment.

A. I dont regard these convulsions, explosions you

call them, as the ordinary remedies, or as remedies at all, but as unavoidable in all governments where misrule has reached such a pitch that it becomes unbearable. In your limited monarchy you have twice submitted to a change of system brought about by violent means; indeed you have twice had a change of system by revolution in the middle and at the close of the same century; nay, twice within, one may say, a single generation. When you speak of the people in a Republic having the whole power, you must recollect that in all governments, even in the most overbearing oligarchies of aristocracy, and the most absolute of pure oriental despotisms, they are to a certain degree considered; the fear of them has its influence, and they are felt even before any revolt happens.

B. This is exactly the consideration I am urging to show that in the very worst systems, in those the most removed from republican, the very opposite in all respects to anything like a commonwealth, it may be contended that the checks exist, which are all or nearly all that you have to show in your republican scheme. Fence the tyrant about with guards, and give him by the law and the religion of the state the most despotic power, he is always subject to fears,—his appointed punishment;* many an act he is thus prevented from doing, and many a pain has he to endure. Even the patrician body in an aristocracy, still more in an oligarchy, is far from being beyond the influence of public opinion; the dread of enraging the people is felt by that kind of ruler which might be supposed the most to despise it, because it is a body and not an individual. The Venetian government always

* Qui terret, plus ipse timet; sors ista tyrannis
Convenit; invideant claris, fortesque trucident:
Muniti gladiis vivant, septique venenis,
Ancipites habeant arces, trepidique minentur.
—*Claud.* iv. *Cons. Hon.*

took especial care to keep the popular feeling on its side. So did the Swiss aristocracies. The Venetian government, indeed, unlike all other aristocracies, was even popular; had the sense of the community favourable to it. The aristocracy of Ancient Rome was on the contrary hateful to the people from its neglect of popular feeling; and nothing tended more than this to its subversion, and that of the commonwealth. Therefore you might just as well contend that in all these instances there exist constitutional checks upon the rulers and official responsibility in them, because of the influence of the public opinion. That has in all these cases some trifling influence; and yet you never dream of contending that it limits or controls the tyrant, whether despot or oligarchy.

A. We have hitherto been rather considering the checks upon encroachment, the securities against usurpation, than those against the improvident or corrupt conduct of affairs—what may be called maladministration. I freely admit that, in a republic, the violent remedy of resistance is almost, if not altogether, required to check usurpation; and further, that a change of the form of government, a revolutionary proceeding, is the probable consequence of the resistance. I differ with you as to a change of measures, or a removal of rulers being so near akin to the same violent proceeding. But, that the people having the entire control in the management of their own affairs, should expose them to more risk of those affairs being ill-managed, than if there were influences to operate different from the popular will, would imply that the concerns of the community can be more safely entrusted to others than the community, which seems somewhat paradoxical. The people never can have any sinister views, any interest in measures hurtful to themselves. They may err; but do you not remove one great risk of maladministration when you take away all possible chance of dishonesty?

B. I need not say that I entirely agree in one part of your statement; indeed, it is not only a true, but self-evident proposition, that the people never can act wilfully against what they deem to be their own interests. Yet I entirely embrace the paradox, as you term it, that their interests are not safe in their own keeping; and, I further deny, that by entrusting them with the undirected and uncontrolled management of their own concerns, you remove every risk except the chance of error; because the people may be guilty of faults, as well as be subject to error; nay, of crimes as well as faults. They can have no interest, for example, in squandering their revenues upon an unjust war; nor any interest in making war unjustly; nor, indeed, in making war at all, unless for self-defence. But they may, with their eyes open to the enormity, make war for the sake of aggrandizement, and are thus guilty of the greatest of crimes. They may be partakers in civil broils, alike disgraceful and criminal. They may approve, nay, assist in persecution from religious zeal, but with rancour which no error in judgment, no want of knowledge can excuse. Your position, therefore, that the people can only go wrong through mistaken views of their own interest, must receive material qualification. They may injure themselves grievously by mismanaging their own affairs; not only through erroneous views of their own interest, but with the weight of guilt upon their heads. However, it is enough if you admit, that by honest, and, therefore, blameless error, their concerns are not safe when left wholly in their own hands; and my charge against your scheme of government is, that it gives full scope to popular ignorance, and delusion, and passion—to every imperfection, and every infirmity from whence erroneous views can arise in framing measures of public policy.

A. How is this to be remedied? What better security have you against error in a limited monarchy?

B. The grand difference is this. In a Republic there is but one governing body reflecting the opinions, and inspired by the wishes of the people. Now, we all know that the only safe course of government as of legislation is for the body representing the opinions and feelings of the people at large, to be joined with another body representing the opinions and feelings of the more enlightened and reflecting classes. This secures full discussion and deliberate judgment after complete investigation. Even if the second body does not derive its authority from the more select and respectable portion of the community, provided it be appointed by an entirely different class from that which chooses the first body; nay, if there be only this difference, that the one is chosen by the votes of the whole, and the other by those of a part only of the people, there will be a great security against hasty and rash determinations. There will be almost a certainty that each matter is fully discussed; and much of the mischief will be avoided which arises from mere ignorance and inadvertance.

A. But what prevents us in a republic from having two deliberative bodies, two chambers, chosen by different constituencies, or with different qualifications?

B. This is the course I have always found the argument to take of those who maintain the excellence of republican government. They adopt the plan of monarchy in its most essential parts; they make their republican approach the monarchical form; they make their republic a half-monarchy—and then say it is better than monarchy.

A. It signifies not what name you give it, still it will be a republic if the rulers are elected and hold their position only for a moderate period; and if there are no hereditary functionaries, nor any who hold positive privilege for life. Call it, if you will, a Mixed Republic.

B. But though such a plan would be incomparably

better than a pure republic, and might be so modified as to come near a mixed or limited monarchy, there seems very great difficulty in supposing that, with none of the resources which monarchy possesses for tempering the violence, or call it only the vehemence, of the people, there could be a fixed and stable plan of government, vested in those bodies and a chief, the chief himself chosen by the people, or by the chambers. The difficulty is manifest. The one body, or chamber which represents the great bulk of the people must, I would say, sooner or later, but certainly at the first difference of opinion upon a question of great and universal interest, (and, with the bulk of the people, almost every question, especially if connected with individuals, becomes easily of great and universal interest), make the other, which represents a class only, give way; and the same thing happening two or three times, this second chamber would cease to exist for all practical purposes. There might be the name of two chambers; but, in reality, the government would be vested in one. As for the Chief, he would be reduced to the position of the Doges of Genoa and Venice.

A. You seemingly forget that something of this kind has actually been tried, and with success, in America, both before and since the separation in 1776; to say nothing of the Colonies which still are under your dominion.

B. You do well to say nothing of them, and little of America before the separation; for in all those Colonial governments the mixed constitution could not be said to exist, as the government of the mother country had the entire control, and prevented the possibility of a serious collision between the powers in the mock constitution of the settlement. But as to the United States, the case, I admit, is widely different. There the experiment has been tried, and is still, perhaps, on its trial. But we are discussing a

question to which the case of the United States is not properly applicable,—the expediency of adopting a pure Republican government in a country where monarchy existed before, where a constitution had, for the first time, to be framed. In America the people were, from time out of mind, habituated to the Mixed Monarchy, under which they had lived before the separation; and though there was only a semblance of the British Government, yet these were the habits incident to the combination and joint-action of the executive power, the council, and the representative assembly. It was comparatively easy to continue this plan, when the independence only removed the paramount control of the parent state. But the circumstances of the country were peculiar, and were well adapted to the experiment. In an old country, densely peopled, and with no outlet for discontented persons by the abundance of good land, the case would be very different. In fact you found it very different in France, where the experiment cannot be said to have had any success. Nothing, in truth, can be more difficult than to maintain the balance of the powers in a mixed government; and there seems no hope of their acting in concert, each in its several department, so as to be all efficacious, and without risk of collision, except by the existence in the community of different classes, in various circumstances, and all trained, as it were, by long continued habit, to perform their several parts, discharge their duties, and exercise their rights, independent of each other, but co-operating together for the service of the state. In other words, this is a condition of things which cannot be produced by any act of the lawgiver; it must have grown up; and when we in England speak of our constitution as the work of time, the growth of ages, we do not use a figure of speech, but state a mere fact. We are not pronouncing a panegyric, or employing the language of exaggeration in any way; we are saying what is

literally and historically true. There are various bodies, with separate functions, as well as rights, and they have all been, in a very long course of time, and by slow degrees, brought to their present state. They have thus been the result of experience; and they have been, in their privileges as well as their duties, accommodated to one another. The juridical office, both of the inferior courts and of the supreme tribunal, the House of Lords—the duties and the powers entrusted to the magistrates, who are either the landowners or the municipal officers of towns—the connexion with property of the elective franchise for their representatives—the privileges of the two Houses of Parliament, securing their independence of the crown, of each other, and above all of the multitude—their rules of procedure, carefully framed from the suggestions of experience, and altered, from time to time, to suit new circumstances, but altered with the utmost caution and even reluctance;—the formation of a landed interest by the rules for the descent and transfer of property—the connexion of the peerage with the people by the younger branches being eligible as representatives, and by the promotion of professional men and others to the Upper House, the emancipation of the Lower House from absolute dependence upon the people, and being gradually so composed as to unite a deliberative with a representative capacity:—But I should be going over nearly our whole system were I to enumerate all the safeguards which, in the course of time, we have obtained for the mutual checks of the different parts of our constitution, and the security, at the same time, against encroachment. Many dread as fatal to it the allowing the whole people to vote—the severance of the elective franchise from all rights of property. But others, and among them some of our greatest landowners, have felt such confidence in the influence of property, and generally, in the power of the Natural Aristocracy,

that they regard even the plan of universal suffrage without the least apprehension. Of one thing I am quite certain, if it ever is adopted, it will be by very slow degrees, accompanied with many precautions, and preparatory measures; and the most strenuous advocates of the plan having been those who considered the great object of parliamentary reform to be the securing a representative body well qualified for the performance of its legislative duties, I very much doubt if the partial trial of the experiment of late years has not somewhat modified, if it have not changed their opinion. But of one thing all men are now well aware, that the alarms of those were groundless, who regarded it as the destruction of the constitutional balance, to give the representative body a wider basis, by materially increasing the number of its constituents. Their fear, not an unreasonable fear, was, that if it too accurately reflected the public opinions and feelings, it must carry all before it, meeting with no effectual resistance from either King or Lords. The Lords have repeatedly both prevented measures from being carried, which the Commons had approved, and on those they allowed, made important alterations in points which had both commanded the greatest support in the country and been the most anxiously pressed by its representatives. In 1835 they greatly altered the English Municipal Corporation Bill; in 1836 they so altered the Irish Bill, that the Government, supported by both Crown and Commons, abandoned the measure; and the same preponderance of the Lords was experienced in the two following sessions. What chance would there have been of such results attending the opposition of a second chamber, if it had not possessed the influence which the Lords derived from their possessions, from their judicial authority, from their connexion with the landed interest, as well as with the representative body; and what but a long established constitution

could have endowed them with these attributes and this influence?

A. Were the Commons unanimous in the cases to which you refer?

B. Certainly not; but the people were far less divided than their representatives. The alterations which the Lords carried against the Commons were on provisions which had great and general favour in the country. But I entirely admit what your question points at, that the resistance of the Lords becomes much more easy when there is a considerable minority in the Commons to support them. This, however, you may recollect, is exactly one of the checks which our constitution has provided in practice to the overpowering influence of the people. The Commons upon the main attack on the Irish Municipal Bill rejected the motion by 307 to 243; the people in both England and Ireland being by a very great majority against that motion, which the Lords afterwards carried by 203 to 129; and adhering to their amendment at a free conference, the Commons gave up the bill altogether, as they did again in the like circumstances the year after. Nay, upon the Reform Bill itself in 1832, two additions were carried against the government, and against the general and strongly pronounced feelings of the country upon the votes of tenants-at-will, and on double votes, the majorities being 272 to 32, and 181 to 91. Now in these instances it was (according to you), the Commons being so much divided that enabled the Lords to prevail. But the representatives of the people differing materially from their constituents, affords, in this way, one security against extreme courses, and one limit to the absolute power of the popular body. Of one thing I can assure you with entire confidence, that on none of these occasions did any person, even of the most easily alarmed, entertain the shadow of an apprehension that the difference

between the two Houses, or the opposition of the Commons to their constituents upon the most exciting questions, could produce the least mischief, or give anything like a shock to the constitution. On one of the occasions—I can speak from direct personal knowledge—Lord Lyndhurst led the opposition to the Municipal Bill of 1835. I had the chief share in resisting him. There never was a Parliamentary battle fought with more determination or indeed more animosity; and we equally laughed at the notion which, for the purpose of the day,—some of our over-zealous partizans were fond of putting about, of collision of the two houses, and a shock to the monarchy. Far different would have been our impression as combatants in a Republic with two councils and an executive directory, or in any new government, the legislation of which was vested in two bodies of recent establishment, and which depended for its security, for the steady and safe working of the state engine, upon the written organic law, the ordinances on paper, instead of the order of things framed and fixed by ages of experience, and innumerable trials.

A. Will you then allow me to ask whether or not your argument applies to a country like England itself, where the people's habits are formed to the combination and mutual action of several powers; and whether a Republic, with all the security of checks and balances, might not succeed there?

B. There no doubt would be a certain facility given to trying this experiment, which in other countries could not exist. But this would be more apparent than real; because the whole habits of thinking and acting, to which you refer, are formed upon the real existence of a monarchical scheme. Remove the power of the crown and the privileges of the aristocracy, and the whole fabric would fall to pieces—unless indeed you assume the impossible event of the whole, or nearly the whole community changing its opinions

and calling for a republic; in which case of course a republic they very likely would have, as soon as the fierce struggle of the minority was overpowered by force of numbers, and finished by massacre. On this deplorable event happening, I am far from denying that upon the inconceivable supposition which you make or to which your argument leads, a commonwealth would be found more practicable than in other countries.

A. Have you not in the whole of our discussion been somewhat unjust towards the people, charging them with crimes as well as follies, and entirely distrusting them, whether acting directly as in small states in modern times, and all the democratic republics of antiquity, or acting through representatives commissioned to disseminate their opinions and fulfil their intentions? You admit that select bodies of them are better than the people at large; but, is it so certain that this body, the mass of the people, must be undeserving of all confidence?

B. I can only apply to the people the same rule which I apply to a prince or an aristocracy, and distrust them as I would any other body, when exercising absolute and uncontrolled power. I only call for the same checks upon their abuse of power as I require upon the abuse of a sovereign's or an oligarchy's. But I may go a good deal farther, at least in comparing the hazards of abuse by the people and by a single tyrant. They are also truly without responsibility of any kind. They are left to themselves, and with no artificial check provided. The tyrant is under the influence of personal fear; the people have nothing to dread. The tyrant is a known individual, on whom public opinion may operate. All mankind knows what he has done, or what left undone; what duty he has violated, what neglected. "The people," as Dean Swift says, in his 'Directions to Servants,' "is nobody's name; no one needs answer to it. To-day

they cry out for an unjust, extravagant, and cruel war; there is no one to charge with the ruin it is causing. To-morrow they as loudly clamour for peace, and run down those who complied with their former call; but there is no one to be charged with either the gross inconsistency or the cruel injustice."—Again, the tyrant acts as the same person, his identity being unquestionable; but there is no possibility of his sheltering himself from hatred or from scorn, and saying it was another and not himself did it. The people have a double escape from the consequences of their misdeeds; they are unknown, except under the collective name; but under that name they may defend themselves from blame, for it is generally pretended that only a small portion of their body were in fault. To a certain degree this is true; and the danger arising from the whole body is therefore all the greater. If the mob of Paris committed all the atrocities of your Revolution, and the rest of the community stood by, can there be a more remarkable illustration of the danger that must result from giving supreme power to the whole mass, when one guilty portion of it can do incalculable mischief armed with that power? And does not the greater likelihood of one portion being corrupt or sanguinary, and committing enormities of cruelty and of fraud, than of the whole being so perverted, make it the more necessary to withhold a power which the whole suffers the part to abuse? I pray you to bear with me when I express, or try to express, the horror with which I am seized, as often as I reflect upon the conduct of the French people during your Revolution.

A. You mean the conduct of the Paris mob. Napoleon used to correct those who spoke of the French people, saying,—"You mean the people of Paris; the Parisian and the Frenchman are different animals."

B. I have just given this as one reason against trusting unlimited power to the people. There may be good ground for believing the people to be incapable of things which a local mob of this body is very capable of doing, while the rest look on, possibly taking the chance of any benefit that may accrue, certainly securing themselves from blame by saying, "Thou cannot say I did it."—We need not say they did it; but it is quite reason enough for distrusting them, that they let it be done. I here must remind you that Marat was the most popular of the Jacobin leaders.

A. I protest against arguments being drawn from Revolutionary times.

B. But when these lasted for years, surely we are bound to consider them as connected with the argument; and that they are natural incidents to a republic, who can doubt? The kind of government which leads to the mob of the town, the seat of the legislature, taking the upper hand, and thus leads to whatever atrocities mobs are prone to commit, is justly answerable, not perhaps for the worst of those excesses, but for the more ordinary acts of violence. It is in vain to deny that Marat was the most powerful with the people, if you will, with the Commune, or, if it so please you, the mob—but still, that portion of the people which ruled the Convention set at nought their decrees of accusation, and forced the majority one day to send to their trial the Girondins, who but a few days before had carried their measures against the Commune, and a short time before had prevailed by triumphant majorities. This wretch, in his speeches to the people, as well as in his journal and other writings, preached wholesale murder,—massacre you may correctly term it. He maintained that the salvation of the Republic required the sacrifice of 270,000 heads; he had but one plan of action—murder—and was quite indifferent to the manner of per-

petrating it, holding it to be just as lawful if done by individuals as by the tribunals.—"We cannot get the Legislature to make aristocrats wear a badge by which they may be distinguished for slaughter, but you have only to wait at the theatres, and you are sure that in killing any well-dressed man who comes out you kill an aristocrat."—He not only superintended the September massacres, but signed the circular of the Committee to the Provincial municipalities, urging them to follow the example of Paris in their prisons. Now this was the people's, if you will, the multitude's favourite. In his conflict with Robespierre and the Jacobins, they supported him against them. But greatly as these abhorred him, they durst not break with him, because they dreaded the influence and the unbridled attacks of "*l'ami du peuple*," as he was called, not only from the title of his journal, but from the people adopting the appellation. Yielding to this fear, the courageous Danton once called him the "Divine Marat," seriously as others had done ironically. He was abhorred and shunned in the Convention, and when on one occasion he complained that he had many enemies among the members, a general shout arose of "All! All!" He was ordered to be arrested and prosecuted both by the Constituent Assembly and the Legislative; but neither ventured to proceed farther. The Convention again sent him to trial; but he was accompanied by the popular leaders and acquitted. The multitude bore him in triumph to resume his seat, and his bust was placed in the Pantheon. All stood in awe of him; but it was clearly not of himself so much as of the people, whose favour he especially enjoyed; and as a proof that the terror was not confined to his influence, and the chance of its being used against the Convention or its leaders, we must recollect that the Assembly attended his funeral, had his portrait, by David, placed in the

hall where they met, and never ventured till after the Revolution of Thermidor, to remove his ashes from the Pantheon, where they had been buried among those of the greatest men of the country. The dread of the people thus survived for two years the fate that rendered this wretch harmless in himself.

A. I can only reckon him a madman. He who in two years after proclaiming the illegality of all capital punishment, could make death the only instrument not merely of criminal justice, but of government, and who could threaten the Convention with suicide, a pistol in his hand, if they decreed his prosecution, cannot be deemed to have been of sound mind.

B. You will observe that this threat proved effectual. No one person, in all likelihood, would have been sorry that death by his own hand freed the Assembly, and humanity itself from such a scourge; but every one felt that they would have been exposed to the fury of his patrons, the people, as accessory to his destruction, and they were fain to give up their intention of proceeding against him, for having incited the multitude to pillage some wealthy merchants' houses, in order to strike terror into all classes of proprietors—an advice which had actually been followed. You will even find the remains of these feelings of awe respecting Marat and the multitude, in very late works of staunch Republicans. The very able account of him by our learned and worthy colleague,* treats him as a "mysterious person," the "curse of God," like Attila, and no more to be blamed than the "last executor of human laws," he being the executor of the Divine law, and not to be the "object of malediction and anathema." His death indeed, is plainly termed "a public misfortune,"† in

* Ph. Lebas Dict. Encyc., vol. x. p. 552-556.

† It is written by M. Jourdan, whose talents and intimate acquaintance with the Revolutionary history are justly praised by the Editor. Vol. xii. preface.

respect of his important services to the cause of the Republic. During the long period of three years, the omnipotence of the multitude endured. They had got so inured to slaughter, and took such delight in it, at least as the means of victory over their adversaries, that the fear of their displeasure prevented Robespierre from bringing to a close the bloody rule of the Triumviral government; and the only change that happened at his downfall was the increased influence of those who no longer could bear the executions, and who derived courage to oppose them, from finding that the multitude no longer required them, at least to the same excess. But though these holocausts were now dispensed with, you will observe that for a year after Thermidor it was necessary to continue the system to a certain degree. Again, in 1797, the Directory had the support of the mob at Paris and elsewhere in their cruel treatment of those individuals under suspicion, and for the most part groundless suspicion, of Royalist designs. When the prisoners appeared in their cages, on the way to the port of embarkation, they were met by the yells of the mob.

A. The horrors of Nantes and Arras have never been by any party violence defended on the Republican side, or imputed to the people by their adversaries. All are agreed that they were the acts of two atrocious individuals. The 'Dictionnaire Encyclopédique,' to which you have referred, has not a word of extenuation of those dreadful crimes.

B. That is quite certain; and yet work of individuals as these horrors were, the people, if we even admit that no portion of them joined in the perpetration, (which is going a good deal farther than I am prepared to go), stood by, and from terror suffered those outrageous acts to be done before their eyes—the scaffold at Arras to be made a shambles, and the Loire at Nantes to run red with

the blood of women and children, as well as men—bore all this without daring to express any horror at the sight. Nay, Joseph Lebon (who indeed had been driven at first into his excesses by the threats of the Committee against his moderation) was only stigmatized by Barrère in his report to the Convention, as having had recourse to "*des formes un peu acerbes.*" The agents, too, of the Committee sent on mission never ventured to do more than hint at the rumours they had heard of the Noyades, and did not venture to express any of the horror with which all men regarded Carrier's infernal proceedings, though filling their reports with complaints of his pride, and his surrounding himself with men of doubtful civism; just as they dared not to say a word of Tallien's sanguinary proceedings at Bordeaux. In their own private letters, these agents ventured to speak out a little more; but they would run no risk of being reprimanded by the Committee for unseasonable humanity.*

A. I grant most fully all that you say, or that any one can say, against the horrid deeds of those times; and I cannot exempt the people from blame in passively bearing them. They were terror-struck, just as the by-standers are by the fury of a single tyrant. The butchery of the Strelitz guards by Peter I., the cruelties of Tiberius, the massacres of Sylla and Marius, were not much less atrocious than those of Carrier and Lebon, Collot, Billaud, and Fouché.

B. No one inveighs against the republican enormities, except as proving how fruitful of the worst evils must ever be the absolute power of the irresponsible people, or a handful of them if you will, and the terror by which they rule the whole community. If the single tyrant works mischief by the same terror, we only say that he is as bad as the mobs of 1793

* Pap. Inédits sur Robespierre, iii. 45, 47, 52.

and 1794; and, we have not the least feeling of preference for such despots as you have named; respecting one of whom, indeed, Tiberius, there seems a mystery not easily penetrated, and which has made a learned German undertake his defence.* But as to the Roman proscriptions, there can be no doubt; and they nearly resembled those of your Republic and its proconsuls.

A. I don't conceive that you can set down to the account of Republics the errors of the Roman government, which really was as imperfect a republic as possible in all respects, and could not be correctly termed a commonwealth at all. It was never even anything like a pure Aristocracy, but it became a mixture of that and Republican government.

B. It certainly was as anomalous and inartificial a system of polity as the world ever saw. It could hardly be called a regular government of any description. The action of its powers seems to have been by constant explosions, incessant revolutionary movements; but this arose from the republican, and certainly not the aristocratic element in its composition. On any emergency there was, as it were by law, a suspension of the constitution, sometimes by making ordinary magistrates supreme, sometimes by appointing a Dictator, a practice which, of course, ended in a perpetual Dictatorship, or a regular despotism. But long before that consummation (to which all republics unquestionably tend), we have instances in abundance to show the mischiefs of popular influence overruling all other power, and governing

* Without going so far as that learned author, it may be permitted to doubt the stories collected by Tacitus and Suetonius, who lived half a century after the period in question; the latter, especially, having a great collection of anecdotes and attacking Julius Cæsar almost as much as Tiberius. Mrs. Hutchison's attacks on the Court of Charles II., though much nearer the times, were in something of the same style. On the other hand, there have been exaggerated panegyrics of Tiberius and Sejanus by Velleius Paterculus, who indeed has been imitated by a modern writer in a panegyric of Abbé Dubois.—*Tacit. Ann.* ii. 6.—*Suet. J. Cæs.* 2, 49.—*Tib.* 61.—*Vel. Pat.* ii. 27, 8.

the state. The consequences were pretty much what you have so fatally experienced in your republican governments, the sudden and perilous power obtained, or rather grasped by important and unprincipled individuals, and which the ordinary course of the laws was unable to counteract. Nay, even after the Consuls were armed with extraordinary power by the country being declared in danger, we find Cicero, the very same day on which he had with difficulty obtained a vote of capital punishment on the persons detected in treason, and confessing their guilt, obliged to have them strangled in prison, because he could not trust the continuance on the morrow of the popular feelings which had the day before declared against the conspirators. As for the principal criminal, the Consul was fain to let him escape, urging him to quit the city, when it was known he must go to head a hostile force, because so many powerful bodies were concerned with him, that mere accident alone gave the government a momentary power to grapple with him, and put the law in force. The body to whom these political adventurers looked were the new plebeians, freed-men, aliens, bastards, ruined men of low station, who somewhat resembled the Paris rabble, and liberated convicts, and were as base a class and as desperate, (being like your criminal conscripts, all trained to war), as the other and older race of plebeians were in every respect estimable.

A. I certainly agree in your view of the Roman commonalty; and never was there a more extraordinary spectacle in politics, than the two classes of aristocracy and democracy from the people of the same community. The old plebeians were a body of small land-owners, living in and near the city, cultivating their own ground, and of the most sober, frugal, pious, and moral habits, having but one vice, the predominating passion for military glory. In the contests between the chiefs of this class and the Patricians, the new plebeians, the worthless class, were the kind of

fund from which each party drew supplies of desperate men, as our rival parties did, and I fear will still do, from the liberated convicts. Of the other body, the Patricians, little needs be said. They had all the vices to which, according to my republican notions—prejudices you will call them—privileged orders are prone. But I must admit that their corruption and profligacy were not without their effects upon the plebeians; and when the plebeians had so far prevailed in the contest that the government could no longer be called an aristocracy, they soon partook of the patrician vices. I must, however, admit, that the peculiar circumstances of Rome make it as difficult for those who maintain my side of the question to derive support from its government, as for your side to argue from it against a commonwealth. One fact only I would press upon your attention, for it is important in considering the people's fitness to be trusted. The existence, for so many ages, of the power of the Tribes, and the prerogative of the Tribunes, is really a proof that a well-educated people may safely be entrusted with power —for the Roman people exercised this with safety, and with no better substitute for sound political information than their hereditary prejudices respecting civil and religious customs.

B. There is a good deal to be said on this head, for there were other checks operating. But I don't enter into the argument, because I set out with admitting that the people may be so educated and improved as to be safely entrusted with large powers. However, I agree with you that our argument derives little illustration from the very peculiar case of Rome.

A. If Rome could not be called republican, you will admit that Athens could. Indeed a more pure Republic can hardly be conceived. The Spartan government was entirely aristocratic, formed on the model of the Cretan, though Polybius, from his extreme prejudice against Crete, denies this, contrary to

the opinion of Plato and Xenophon. Of the Carthaginian government we hardly know anything; but it seems to have been a mixed aristocracy, inclining to democracy, as Aristotle commends it for that leaning. But in Athens we have an example of an absolutely pure Republic.

B. Surely you don't mean to contend for Republican government from the example of Athens, perhaps, excepting the elective monarchy of Poland, the very worst ever known in the world. That there were several checks upon the absolute power of the multitude is certain, else the government could not have gone on for a year, nay, for a month, with the whole functions of the state, executive, legislative, judicial, all in the hands of the people; the great majority of whom were in the poorest circumstances, so that a large proportion of them received a daily allowance from the public to keep them from starving, a people voting secretly, less than half educated, the appointed prey of corruption and intrigue, under the most unprincipled of men, though the most eloquent. But it is needless to go farther. I will at once admit that, from these extreme cases of bad government, I have no right to argue against a commonwealth, merely because that scheme in its purity brought ruin upon the affairs of the state, both foreign and domestic, and dealt the most cruel injustice to the most eminent of its citizens. But the example of Athens may well remind us of one great mischief of Republican government; for that was also the extreme case of the evil influence of party in ancient, as the government of America is in modern times.

A. I really don't see why America should be placed on this eminence, seeing the Italian republics, which I can only call aristocracies, were as much the prey of party as the United States.

B. One can really hardly designate the factions in those republics, or if you will, aristocracies, with the

name of party. They were bands of armed men fighting under their leaders, the members of rival families, whose houses were fortified against each other, as well as their retainers embodied. It was feudal animosity and civil war, not party contest. These States were in the same condition habitually, in which France and England were upon rare occasions, as the wars of York and Lancaster—of Burgundians and Armagnacs, with this difference, that in all probability the whole people, every family great and small, were partizans, and often each house divided against itself in the contests of the Albrizzi and Ricci at Florence, or the Cortes and Voltas at Genoa. But I meant that the United States furnished the extreme case of party in the modern sense, such as it has existed with us, or in Holland and Belgium, or with you after the Restoration of Royalty: for in the times of the Republic your parties came much nearer the violence of the Italian communities, the war being carried on nominally in the Convention, but really in the clubs and the streets. Nor can I with confidence affirm that such openly hostile proceedings, though in other respects incalculably more fatal, are attended with the same pernicious consequences to public virtue, and even to the people's morals, as the less sanguinary contests of ordinary factions. These tend to bring all principle into dis-esteem and even contempt. They make opinions be taken up or rather professed to suit a purpose. All is fabricated and pretext; avowed principles do not guide men's conduct; they are the counters with which the game of faction is played. Public virtue is made a laughing-stock, and the most disgusting hypocrisy exhibited in pretending to regard certain measures as all-important, certain opinions as sacred, when all the while it is well known that the whole is a mere pretence. This must necessarily lower the tone of political morality and debase the character of the people. Your contests doubtless, years ago, were far more terrible, because

they were sanguinary, and they moved the people to blood; but I question if our party contests and stratagems, and still more those of the United States with their perpetual canvass and the great mixture of the most sordid motives, does not tend more to corrupt the people. Yours made them more cruel; ours more dishonest. One thing must be admitted on all hands, that a republic is more certain to be torn in pieces by factions than a limited monarchy, inasmuch as the whole power of the State is in the hands of the successful chiefs, and the contest is for the certainty of direct dominion and supreme power, and not merely for the chance of a share in it.

A. Do you deny to the parties in a Republic the beneficial action of combining to influence the conduct of affairs? I have often heard you contend that the opposition in England, and I presume also under the French restored monarchy, had considerable power of affecting the movements of the State.—You used to argue dynamically from the parallelogram of forces, that the motion was neither in the direction which the government wished to give it, nor yet in that which its adversaries desired, but, as it were, in the diagonal, so that each force operated, though in different proportions.—Is it not so likewise in a Republic?

B. I do not refuse the dynamical illustration; on the contrary, I should have recourse to it for the purpose of showing the great difference between the action of party in the two systems of government. In a Republic the opposition force bears no assignable proportion to that of the government; or if it is at all considerable, it does not act angularly to the other; its direction is entirely opposite; it acts either to retard the motion of the State without changing its direction, or to stop that motion altogether. It is not a combined force, but an obstructive or a divellent; and all experience proves that this is the case. This entire impotence of the minority is one of the cardinal

defects of a Republic, which thus recognizes only the right of part of the people to be consulted; and thus loses the benefit of the other parts' counsels. The consulting the whole community is, on the other hand, one of the cardinal virtues of mixed government, both because it gives a voice to the minority consistently with the interests of liberty, and because it unites all the people in council, indeed in action too, consistently with the beneficial management of the public affairs.

A. It must be allowed, however, that the movements of party interpose a substantial check to the absolute power of the republican government as representing the people; and thus mitigate the evil of the popular domination you so much dread. In whatever way you consider that domination as formidable (and I am far from disguising its terrors), you must admit that it is divided, and thus becomes less absolute in consequence of there always being a party to resist what you call the overwhelming force of the people—a party dividing the people itself.

B. You say in whatever point of view we consider the domination.—Let us take an instance or two. There is a great question—peace or war, we will suppose. The prevailing opinion of the people is for war, as, no doubt, all republics are prone to this course, while an aristocracy leans to that of peace. That of Venice, the most perfect example of this form of government, was celebrated for its steady devotion to a peaceful policy. Can any one believe that in the democracy, a division of opinion would prevent the war unless the peace party were so great as almost to threaten a disruption of the government? A considerable minority, though wholly unable to produce any violent change in the frame of the government, would be quite sufficient in a limited monarchy to prevent the recourse to hostilities. Mr. Pitt's powerful ministry in 1791 was stopt in its course by a

strong division in the Commons, after the armament to attack Russia had actually been prepared. But although party will be insufficient to prevent the popular excitement from plunging the community into a war, it will be oftentimes quite powerful enough to interfere with the conducting of military operations, and to give material aid to an enemy by, as it were, operating a diversion in his favour. It is remarkable that in the Italian republics there was generally, indeed almost always, some party connected with the enemy, and often openly seeking his support. It was, indeed, one result of their factious violence, and of the whole community being engaged on one or other side, that often the chief executive power, almost always the chief judicial authority, was entrusted to foreigners, because no person belonging to one party was safe if the judge or *podesta* belonged to the other. In the Greek republics, with all the high-toned enthusiasm for the country, and against its adversaries, the leaders of the party defeated in their civil contentions very generally went over to the enemy, after seeking assistance from him in the conduct of the party warfare,—a thing wholly unheard of, it may be said never even dreamt of, by the most desperate factions of modern times.

A. But take the American factions, which seem to have inspired you with so much dislike. Must not these so greatly lessen the force of popular opinion, as to make the government anything rather than absolute in its contests with individuals? I am, of course, referring to cases in which the constituted authorities would be insufficient to check any oppressive proceedings. I quite admit, for example, the natural tendency of a government which is the people itself, to press intolerably on any person whom the popular voice may condemn. But if he is supported by a party, this affords him some protection. That the violence of party is extreme in that country, I cannot

doubt; judging indeed by their press, it must exceed all we have ever known in Europe. Our most abominable journals in the worst times of the Revolution fell far short of the habitual scurrility of the American press; and the openly avowed profligacy of some of its conductors makes them worthy of being ranked with the Heberts, the Chaumettes, and the Marats. But into that subject I don't wish to divert you. I refer generally to the protecting influence of party.

B. You advert, no doubt, to one of the most grievous of all the sufferings from unbridled popular power, one of the greatest vices of the democratic polity. There is no escape from the tyrant; he is everywhere. In a pure despotism only men of eminent station feel the scourge; from the despot and his representatives even those men may often be saved. But in a Republic there is no one so humble as to be overlooked by the predominant party. The press you justly speak of has its victims among the most obscure members of society, just as your guillotine had in 1794 among persons wholly insignificant, but sacrificed to private interest and spite. While the struggle lasts, there is general hatred and vituperation; a kind of lawless anarchy prevails in society. As soon as victory declares for one party, there is no safety for those who differ with it by ever so slight a shade. In the United States, to which you refer, no one dares say anything that thwarts the prevailing prejudices or popular opinions of the day. On such subjects there can be nothing like free discussion. I remember well when even in England, some fifteen years ago, when the government only approached to the embodiment of public opinion upon some questions that excited the country, there was little possibility of hinting gently at some of the glaring defects in our Reform of 1832, almost as little as of attacking slavery in the Southern States of America, or the equal distribution

of land in France, to the injury of agriculture and the ruin of a mixed government. But in a country where the people is supreme, all opinion is stifled that accords not with the taste of the government; and hence not only the oppression of individuals, but the loss of assistance to the state by sound advice, and the statement of wholesome truths. Don't by any means imagine that the single despot alone is for himself and for his country unfortunate in never hearing the truth, because no one dares tell it him. Your many-headed tyrant is as little to be approached by honest and truth-speaking men—as capricious, as irascible. Extremes thus meet. They meet in another way. I believe you will agree with me in thinking that in whatever country of the old world a pure republic is tried, the failure of the experiment, which you will not admit to be so certain as I deem it, must needs lead to one result, as it has heretofore done in France, once at least, the establishing of an absolute monarchy.

A. On this subject we are hardly required by our present discussion to enter. Our whole conversation has been hitherto confined to the general, and, as it were, abstract question,—the relative merits of Republics and Monarchy. On this question the course has practically been chosen, and taken in both our countries; and nothing remains but for us to submit, and for you to rejoice. You have a form of government which has many great defects in my view of the subject, because of its wide departure from what I regard as the only mode of securing the people's liberty, and excluding the abuse of power, by the vesting it in those who can have no interest in the use of it but the good of the community. Yet it is a government under which your nation has long prospered, and continues to flourish.

B. But it will not continue to flourish if its statesmen, and the classes of society that are entitled to exercise influence over the public mind, do not guard

scrupulously against rash changes; do not set themselves against the pernicious folly of trying every remedy for admitted abuses that may be propounded, without carefully examining whether more evil may be thus worked than that which it is desired to cure. We are safe at present from all the countless ills of anarchy and mob government. It is our own fault if ever we are exposed to the risk of this last of calamities. But whoever would well perform his duty to the country, in whatever position he is placed, that arms him with any power of affecting the course of the national councils, is bound most seriously and anxiously to meditate upon the history of your great Revolution, from 1788, down to the present day—to gather from the contemplation lessons of wisdom and of warning—to regard everything which can by possibility lead to unsettle the monarchy and its kindred institutions, as of all things most to be deprecated, because tending to the catastrophe most to be deplored.

INDEX.

America, U.S., reflections on government of, 298 to 308.
Arago, M., his political opinions, 377.
his tribute to Carnot, 191, *note*.
Assembly, Constituent, 27.
Legislative, 27.
names of its members, 27.
Autun, Bishop of. *See* Talleyrand.

Bar, the French, 253.
nobly defended the victims of the Convention, 253.
L. de Malesherbes distinguished, 254.
a patriot, advocate for Louis XVI., and a victim, 255.
Bentham, resembled Abbé Siéyes in his intellectual character, 98.
Brissot, 238.
educated as an advocate, 239.
his writings, 239.
escapes to England, then to America, 240.
returns to France, 240.
advocates war against England, 241.
inconsistency of the Girondins, 242 to 245.
characteristics of the party, 245 to 250.
accused of intrigues, 250.
Burke, his mistakes, 207, *note*.

Cambacérès, contrasted with Siéyes, 102.
Camille Desmoulins, friend of Danton, his fall, 71.
his character, 76.
attack on the Bastile, 77.
his nickname, 77.
not an orator, 78.
as a writer, 82.
extracts, 82-8.
Carnôt, his genius and virtue, 172.
his precocious military tastes, 174.
'Eloge de Vauban,' 174.
mixes in politics, 175.
in charge of the war department, 176.
Carnôt exonerated from the guilt of massacres, 178-9.
himself in danger, 180, and *note*, 180.
his integrity, 180.
self-denial, 181.
his extraordinary successes, 184.
founds the Polytechnic school, 186.
retirement, 186.
proscribed, 188.
his works, 188-9.
again war minister, 189.
his patriotism, 189-90.
again exiled, 191.
Arago's testimony, 191, *note*.
Napoleon's, 190.
Carrol, Charles, 275.
family history, 275.
his learning, 276 to 278.
his death at age of ninety-five, 279.
Catherine, her profligacy and cruelty, 356-7.
a 'tigress mother,' 357.
her great talents, 358.
partition of Poland, 359, 365.
her vanity, 359-360.
her 'Code,' 361.
patronage of science, 362.
contrasted with Elizabeth of England, 363.
her policy, 366.
her intrigues in Sweden, 337.
Causes of revolution, 22, 42, 45, 63, 74, 75, 78, 79, 87 to 97.
Siéyes' reforms, 98-9, 114, 117, 130.
Chaveau-Lagarde, advocate of Louis XVI., 253.
and of General Bonnain in 1816, 259.
Cicero, his distrust of popular feeling, 428.
Clubs in Paris, 11.
Collôt, his plot against Lyons, 41.
Constituent Assembly, 27.
Convention, National, 22, 26, 42.
Coudray, Tronçon de, 255.
advocate for the king, 255.

Couthon, one of the Triumvirate, a paralytic, 80.
Curchod, Madlle., wife of Neckar, the admired of Gibbon, 127, *note.*

Danton, his rise, 64.
contrasted with Robespierre, 65.
his character and talents, 65-6.
his speeches, 67, 70.
private character, 69.
his death, 70.
vagueness of the charges against him, 72-3.
jealousy of Robespierre, 74-5.
Debates, Revolutionary, the style of, 78-9, to 81.
salaries of revolutionist leaders, £15 a-month, *notes* 182, 183.
Deseze, counsel for Louis XVI., 256.
Dialogue on Republican and Monarchical Government, 375.
chief power is in Parliament, 381.
limited monarchy provides checks and control, 385.
hereditary succession useful from its certainty, 386.
Louis XIV., and his twin brother in the iron mask, 386, 387.
succession in England, in Turkey, in France, 387.
contests for power less frequent in monarchies than in republics, 388, 389.
civil war, 389.
canvassing for places in United States of America, 390.
anarchy of French Revolution, 390-1.
lottery of military ambition, 391.
elective judges, an evil, 393.
the people of a republic influence election of chief magistrate, 393.
who is the chief of a faction, 394.
honours and titles are therefore inconsistent with republican government, 394-5.
Cicero's definition of freedom, 395.
authority in a republic may be oppressive, 396.
men do not obey on abstract principles, but *instinctively* obey power *and superiority*, 397.
the English free every seven years, 397.
envy, 397.
power *is* abused under all despotisms, 398.
'responsibility of ministers,' at best nominal, 398.
Dialogue on Republican and Monarchical Government:—
denied, Strafford and Hastings' cases, 399.
sovereign power, hereditary, with control of revenues and honours, dangerous to liberty, 400.
power of the crown limited by the nobles, a clumsy check, 400.
mixture and balance of powers, 401.
violent change of democratic rulers, an evil, 402.
no democratic responsibility, 403.
reprobation not felt in a republic, 403-4.
nor by a ministry, 405.
impeachments useful, 405.
democracy requires overwhelming majorities, 406.
sudden removal of officers in a republic, resemble organic changes, 406.
oligarchies and despotisms *are* influenced by public opinion, 407.
clamour and intrigue often guide men and measures in democracies, 408.
assassination and insurrection, the checks on despotism, 410.
in a republic, *resistance* alone checks usurpation, but it may also produce revolution, 412.
the people may err, make aggressive war, be religious persecutors; popular government *gives scope to popular ignorance, delusion, and passion*, 413.
two bodies, or chambers, representing different classes, safer than one only, 414.
but a third power still wanting as umpire, 414.
as in America, 415.
where the people had been for ages accustomed to mixed monarchy, 416.
balance of power difficult to be maintained, cannot be done by any act of law, 416.
must be the work of time as in England, 416.
number and variety of governing interests and powers in England, 417.
Aristocracy and Commons differing, yet arranging public acts to the satisfaction of the people, 418, 419.

Dialogue on Republican and Monarchical Government:—
illustrations, 419, 420.
the people as little to be trusted with uncontrolled power as aristocracies or despotisms, 421, 422.
examples, Marat and his murders, 423-4.
his command of the mob, 425-6.
suppression of facts from fear, 427.
Roman proscriptions resembled the revolutionary, 428.
Cicero's distrust of popular feeling, 428.
struggles in Rome, patricians and plebeians, 429-30.
Spartan government, aristocratic; the Carthaginian, mixed; the Athenian, aristocratic; Poland, an elective monarchy, 430.
United States of America compared with Athens, 431.
the Italian States torn by *feudal* animosities, 431.
party and *faction*, evils of, illustrated by United States of America, Britain, Holland, Belgium, and France after 1815, 432.
a 'party,' though a minority, may obstruct a war policy in Britain,—Pitt in 1791, 433.
American factions embarrass that government, 434.
no free discussion in United States of America in times of excitement, 435.
'extremes meet,' 435.
British constitution ought to be guarded against rash changes, 436.

Education, in Russia, *note* on, 362.
Elizabeth of England contrasted with Catherine of Russia, 363.
her conduct to Mary, of Scotland, 368.
Appendix, 368.
England in 1832 contrasted with United States of America, 304.
Executions, revolutionary, numbers of, 37, 38, 41-2, 44, 86.

Feudal abuses in France, 9.
Fouché, Duke of Otranto, 103.
at Brussels in 1815—conversations with Wellington, 103.
originally a professor, 104.
anecdotes of him, 104 to 106.
Fouché, Duke of Otranto, his presence of mind, 105.
minister of Police to Napoleon, 107.
connection with Talleyrand, 107.
share in the atrocities of the Revolution, 109.
letters, 109-10.
his peculiarities, 110 to 114.
Franklin, Benjamin, 291.
his origin, 291.
studies, 292.
line of action, 293.
integrity, 294.
Frederic II., early trials, 309-10.
his ingratitude, 311, 313.
and cruelty, 314 to 318.
his amusements, 318-19.
kidnapping soldiers, 320.
injustice to his officers, 321-22.
to his subjects, 324-26.
monopolies a source of revenue, 326-27.
"Prussian monarchy scraped together by violence and fraud," 328.
Poland, 329.
his strategy in war, 330.
his attainments, 330.
Freedom defined, 395.

Galser, M., secretary to Frederic II., 321.
Gironde party, history of, 19.
defeated by the mountain party, 57.
Gustavus III. of Sweden, 332.
power of the Senate, 333.
his hypocrisy, 334.
coup d'etats, 334, 336, 338.
his dishonesty, 337.
intrigues of Catherine, 337.
his profligacy, 339.
his accomplishments, 340.
assassinated, 341.

Hamilton, of United States, America, 287.
secretary of Treasury, 288.
Hastings, Warren, accused for party purposes, 399.
Hereditary succession, its uses, 385.
Heron causes the death of ten or twelve bankers, 36.
Hume, D., witty remark of, 373.

Irish, the, contrasted with the French, 87.
'Iron Mask,' twin brother to Louis XIV., 366.

Jacobin Club, its origin, 12.
their excesses, 31-2.
Jefferson, Thomas, education, 280.
devotes himself to politics at age of twenty-five, 281.
moderation of the Americans, 282.
'Declaration' of 4th July,—extract, 284.
proposed manumission of slaves, 284.
plan of education, abrogation of law of primogeniture, 285.
its effects, religious equality, 286.
sent as minister to Paris, 287.
secretary of state, 287.
president, 289.
death, 290.
Joseph, Emperor of Germany, 344.
travels in Italy, 346.
power held by Maria Theresa, 346.
his admiration of Frederic II., 347, 354.
comparison with him, 348 to 351.
takes part in the partition of Poland, 351.
his only successful enterprise, 352.
visits France and Russia, 353.
confusion of affairs, death, 354.

Lafayette, flight to America, 195.
revisits United States of America, 197.
France and United States of America contrasted, 199, 200.
his simplicity, 201-2.
stupidity of the court, 203, 204.
ingratitude of princes, 206.
in exile till 1815, 208.
commands national guard in 1830, 208.
his virtues greater than his capacity, 209.
Laws, perversion of, 37, 40, *note*.
Legendre, the butcher, anecdotes of, 81.
Louis XIV., twin brother to the 'Man in the Iron Mask,' 366.

Malesherbes, 254.
Marat, advises execution of 270,000 aristocrats, 93.
memoir of, 94.
Mary, Queen of Scots, 368.
statements concerning, 368.
Masson, Chevalier, treatment of, by Frederic II., 316.
Milton, passages in, similar to railleries of Revolutionists, 81.
Mirabeau, 143.
the father, an 'Economist,' 145.
family history, 146.
his works, 148.
amiable character of Bailli de Mirabeau, 149.
his letters, 153-4.
H. G. Mirabeau, 155.
his character, 156-7.
connection with Madame Monnier, 157.
her death, 161.
cruelty of the father, 158-59.
the 'merciless aristocracy,' 161.
his speeches, 163 to 165.
his great eloquence destructive to the monarchy, 167.
his selfishness, 167 to 169.
dies at forty-two, 170.
Monarchical government, dialogue on, 375.
Monarchy, constitutional, its checks, 385.
its evils, 399-400.
Monnier, Madame, 157. *See* Mirabeau.
Motives to revolution, 22, 42, 45, 63, 74, 75, 78, 87 to 97, 114, 117, 130.
Mountain party, struggle against, 56.

Napoleon, his family, 261.
his first commands, 261.
his merits, 261 to 263.
his fatal ambition, 263.
his military genius, 264 to 267.
analogy between military and naval tactics, 267.
his political genius, 268.
the 'Code,' Bulletins, &c., 268.
his ambition, 269.
his cruelty, 270.
Neckar, his origin, 119.
sent to Vernet's Bank in Paris, 120.
his character, 120.
his attainments, 121.
Director-General in 1777, 121.
financial success, 121.
'administrative reforms,' 122.
opposition of Maurepas, 122.
abolition of property tax, 122.
resignation, 123.
changed a large deficit to a surplus, 123.
restores "confusion" in finance, 123.
Neckar, sent for, 124.

Neckar, Calonne restores confidence and order; his incapacity in matters purely political, 124-26.
his dismissal the signal for revolution, 125.
his ultimate retirement and pursuits, 127.
his courageous honesty, 128-29.
visited by Napoleon, 129.
reflections on popular movements, 130.
his works valuable, 131.
Negroes in America, prospects of, 307.
Ney, 234.
his professional genius, bravery, and want of principle, 234.
his errors at Waterloo, 235.
his vacillation and ruin, 236.
Wellington's non-interference defended, 236-37.

Orange, atrocities there, 38.
Otranto, Duke of. *See* Fouché.

Pailly, Madame, mistress of Mirabeau, 147.
Party impeachments, Hastings, 399. Melville, 405.
Perigord. *See* Talleyrand, 211.
Pitt, prevented from war against Russia in 1791 by a minority, 433.
Princes, incompetent, mischiefs they cause, 354.

Reflections on causes and characters of Revolution, private ambition, its errors and evils, 114.
differences of character, not allowed for, 116.
excited feelings of parties, bias the judgment, 117.
the great lesson taught, viz., importance of firmness and courage in the individuals holding the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of government, 118.
force of popular feelings before a great movement, cannot be controlled afterwards, by its originators, 130.
cruelty of the aristocracy, 161.
'times (in France) when each week staggered under a load of events, that had formerly made centuries to bend,' 170.
atrocities compared with 'St. Bartholomew' and Irish in 1641, 177.
Reflections on causes and characters of Revolution, note on wars, 181.
Republicanism never popular in France, *note*, 187.
ingratitude of people and of rulers to public benefactors, 198.
France and United States of America, contrasted, 199.
the end of all government, 306.
rule 'not to hurt general feelings,' 352.
Reflections on causes and characters of Revolutions, 22 to 25, 42, 43, 45, 63, 74, 75, 78, 87.
importance of education, 89.
patriotism, 90.
invasion of allies led to violence, 90.
impunity for bad men, 93.
danger of political bodies interfering with administration of justice, 96-7.
Abbé Siéyes' reforms carried out, 98-9.
one of his absurdities, 101.
Reign of terror, 86. *See* Executions.
Republics, remarks on, 295, 308, 375.
Republicans in Paris, 19, 29.
never numerous, 187.
Revolution, causes of, 1.
philosophers, 5.
deranged finances, 7.
abuses in church and state, 8.
feudal abuses, 9.
the clubs, 11.
Jacobins, 12.
their influence on the assembly, 15.
Girondists, 19.
Republicans, 19.
massacre of Swiss guards, 21.
convention, 22.
reflections, 22.
committees of safety, 27.
plan of working, 28.
names of members, 27-8.
death of the king, 30.
excesses of the Jacobins, 31.
rise of Robespierre, 33.
death of Danton, 35.
increase of executions without trials, 35-6.
law passed to condemn without evidence, 37.
and disallowing advocates, victims 700 to 800 a-month, 38.
destruction of Lyons planned, 41.
massacres there, 41-2.

Revolution, causes of:—
private enmities and friendships, 36, 42.
Collôt and Fouché's share in the excesses, 44.
Revolution, French, reflections on, 22.
1st, demagogues should be watched; 2d, a mob may intimidate the authorities; 3d, the pusillanimity of upper classes may prove fatal, 24.
reasonable reforms ought to be granted, 25, 42, 43. *See* Reflections.
Lyons, massacres there, 41-2.
Robespierre, ruled the Jacobins, 33.
quarrels with Danton, 34.
memoirs, 46.
his character, 47.
his conceit, 49.
austerity, 50.
his enmity to the respectable and middle classes, 52-3.
his eloquence, 54.
struggle of the Mountain party, 56.
speeches, 57-8.
his industry as an orator, 59.
his republicanism doubtful, 60.
his last great effort and speech, 61-2.

Safety, Committee of, 27.
Schwerin, Marshal, at battle of Molwitz, 316.
Siéyes, Abbé, 98.
importance of his writings underrated, 98.
his plans adopted, 99.
secured the Revolution, 99.
Mignet's account of him, 99.
absurd scheme of consulate, 101.
return to Paris in 1830, 102
Talleyrand's estimation of, 125.
Spy system of St. Just and Robespierre, 86.
Staël, Madame de, a political and literary character, 132.
critique on 'Corinne' and other works, 133 to 136.
her love of liberty, 137, 140, 141.
and of discussion, 138-39.
advocacy of the queen and opposition to Napoleon, 138.
Genevan character, 140.
her Christianity, 142.
St. Just, 76.
inferior to Danton, 83.
his character, 83.
attached to Robespierre, 84.
his writings, 84.
spy system, 84.
wholesale murders, 86.
Strafford, sacrificed by Charles I., 399.
Succession, hereditary, its uses, 385.
Sydenham, Lord, his remarks on Americans, 297.
not a qualified judge of United States of America, 298.
his errors, 298.
Swiss guards, massacre of, 218.

Talleyrand, 211.
noble family—superseded in his birthrights — devoted to the Church—sides with Revolutionary party, 212.
emigrates, 212.
in office under Napoleon, 213.
and the Bourbons, 214.
his political integrity discussed, 214 to 216.
his discernment and conversational talent, 217, 220.
extracts from his writings, 219.
his witticisms, 221.
his love of peace, 223.
Tallien, 225.
his origin, patronized by Danton, 225.
concerned in the massacres, 226 to 229.
a mob leader, 229.
sent to Bordeaux, 230.
extorts money by the guillotine, 230.
recalled, 231.
his cruelty, 231-32.
goes to Egypt, 231.
consul at Alicant—dies in 1820, 232.
Tronchet, advocate for the king, 257.
promoted abolition of law of primogeniture, 258.

Vauban, Eloge de, 174.
Voltaire's quarrel with Frederic II., 316.

Washington, contrasted with Napoleon, 271.
his feelings to France and England, 272.

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